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HOPELESS

CASE







# *A Hopeless Case*

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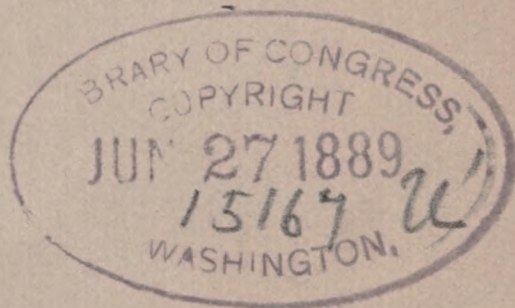
*The Remarkable Experience of an Unromantic*

*Individual With a Romantic Name*

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5 ✓  
*BY LUTHER H. BICKFORD*

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CHICAGO  
CHARLES H. KERR & COMPANY  
175 DEARBORN STREET  
1889

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PZ 3

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By LUTHER H. BICKFORD



*With an humble apology to an already  
sorely afflicted public, the author  
proceeds.*



# A HOPELESS CASE

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## An Unpretentious Narrative

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# A HOPELESS CASE

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## LESLIE MARLTON'S STORY

### I

Every one, nearly, speaks of luck. I never believed in it. You hear of bad luck and good luck and, sometimes (in the west) of "passable" luck. I know a man who smashed three looking-glasses in as many days. On the fourth, he fell heir to an estate valued at \$50,000, on the fifth was visited by a number of politicians, on the sixth was nominated a candidate for the State senate, and several weeks later, landed in that seat of power through an overwhelming majority. Four years later he entered the lower house of Congress and to-day, it is said, has an eye on the upper house. There is a snug position in a certain white executive mansion, just yawning for that man. Now <sup>is</sup> ~~is~~ this <sup>in</sup>



accordance with the superstitious decree? I think not, and therefore never review my experiences as "lucky" or "unlucky," for I look upon the incident in the light of a lesson.

My unfortunate acquaintance with Kohler began on a certain day in July — to be concise, designated as a day in American history when one is supposed to discharge Chinese fireworks and conduct one's self in a manner considered highly disgraceful at any other time.

This day might be commonly described as "insufferably hot," but that would in no way do justice to it, for the sun glared on the people, the horses, the carts, the steeples, the houses of the city with an insolence that seemed intolerable.

I had risen early that morning, although my duties at the theatre on the night previous were very fatiguing, I having been cast for an exceedingly heavy part, one that necessitated much stage work, and had not retired until the hands on my watch were in decidedly close proximity to the figure one. Nevertheless, 6 o'clock found me decidedly wide-awake and attiring myself in the lightest of "light weight"



suits to be found in my somewhat too extensive wardrobe. I dressed with much care, although I most frankly say there was no person, excluding, of course, myself, who would have considered the occasion demanded it. In fact, Richmond, my room-mate, roundly denounced it. The uncompromising truth was, I had an engagement to meet. The matter was in no especial need of being pressed until 1 o'clock in the afternoon, yet so greatly agitated was I, I fear my sleep had been seriously interrupted by my mind dwelling on the "coming event" for a too lengthy time the day and evening previous.

No threatening or imperative creditor caused this—I think I am commendably free from debts of all kinds—nor was it the death of a dear friend or relative, the unexpected bequeathing of a large fortune, nor the—well, nor any of the evils and delights of that order, the impatient flesh is heir to. Misfortune seldom troubles me. I really have but one misfortune—the possession of a romantic name.

It was a young lady.

Miss Marion Barbury is a very attractive, not to say charming young woman, whose success



as an *ingenue* with the famous Liston stock company, at Liston's theatre, has been—histrionically speaking—tremendous. She is in every way a typical *ingenue*; vivacious, sprightly, with clear brown eyes, a proper amount of brown hair to correspond, and the brownest of cheeks any girl, soubrette or otherwise, on the stage or away from it, was ever blessed with. Miss Barbury is, one might say, a brown girl altogether—only the very common Christian name being needed to complete the symphony in brown.

There are, of course, people with whom Miss Barbury's style of beauty is not taking. Miss Phialgirl, whose interpretation of *Pauline* is execrable—yet who is firmly impressed there is not a better on the stage, such being the manner of the typical leading lady—has been known to remark that Miss Barbury's beauty would not bear analysis, or worse yet, a contact with *aqua pura*. Miss Phialgirl has, however, passed a number of years on this planet, and, it might be remarked, is growing cynical.

Then there is such a thing as professional jealousy.



Be these things as they may, I have always considered Miss Barbury a very accomplished, charming, and otherwise thoroughly attractive woman.

Arrangements for a trip up the river on the excursion boat "Thespian" was decided upon as a quiet and proper method of celebrating the day, the entire Liston Company, through the courtesy of the manager, who had released all from the terrors of a summer day matinée, to be included in the outing. Although it was midsummer, Liston's theatre had been running with profit to players and manager, and though a holiday matinée would, no doubt, have been very profitable, we were given a matinée of our own, and it is hardly necessary to say we all appreciated it.

The morning hours finally passed, although to me they seemed interminably long, and at one o'clock I was stepping on board the "Thespian," and—I congratuled myself—gracefully assisting Miss Barbury. We were the first on board. This may, or may not have been the consummation of a concocted scheme of my own.



My companion expressed some surprise at seeing no one around.

"You told me," she said, with a most bewitching pout, "that you were sure we would be late, and I hurried purposely, supposing, from the manner in which you spoke, the boat had already gone from the dock."

I assured her, by way of answer, that some delay must have been occasioned, for I was sure my watch was correct; and drawing forth the time-piece let her observe that the hands pointed to half past two o'clock.

"Then why are not the remainder of the company here? The boat was to have gone at two." Then, in an anxious tone, "Do you suppose anything has gone wrong—is it possible they have boarded another boat? There is one similar to this near the dock just below us, and I can see people moving about. I really think —"

Just then, a confounded clock situated—I never tried to discover where, chimed out with annoying and unnecessary loudness the hour of one.

"Why it's but one o'clock," exclaimed Miss



Barbury in surprise. She looked up at me in a distrustful, yet perfectly bewitching way, and observed, "You have been trifling again."

I guessed my watch must be in need of repairing and informed her how much I had been troubled of late by its unreliability. As a proof of this I cited my lateness at rehearsal on one occasion.

"When was it?" she demanded.

"Why-er, oh, at the 'School for Scandal'—you remember the instance."

"Indeed I do not; I do not remember that you were ever late at rehearsal; at which rehearsal of the play was it?"

"Well, now-er-why the first, to be sure."

"The first! Now I am sure you were not, for I well remember I was the first one on the stage that afternoon and was—was waiting for you; you came in with Brown, I remember and——"

"Did you see that kite over the way there—ah," as she looked eagerly toward the building at which I had pointed, "what a pity! it has fallen."

"Was it a large one?"

"Yes, quite," I replied, relieved to find the



deviation successful. I might have asked why she took such great interest in the time I attended the rehearsals, but somehow I had not the courage.

Ever since the first woman "set the fashion" for curiosity, it has remained one of the most extensively cultivated ingredients of their natures; and not only of theirs, but the natures of their sexual opposites. Curiosity, in man, finds vent in seeing if possible (and few things are impossible to the curious) the instrument of curiosity itself. With women it is much the same — added with an eagerness to question. The laborer and railway prince jostle elbows to observe the street fakir; the factory girl turns to catch a glimpse of the popular actress just as does the daughter of the rich senator. We all read the circus poster with avidity and ask ourselves if the runaway horses dashing along the street will eventually harm themselves. We all pray we may never become the victims of a railway wreck, yet wonder what our sensations would really be, did we fall through a bridge!

We walked to the upper deck and seated ourselves on a bench at one side, she gazing



retrospectively at the water, while I — well, I fancied I detected a pin out of place in her hair and began looking intently at that, then at her cheeks, which I observed, never seemed healthier or browner. We all admire innocence and honesty — perhaps because both are becoming so rare. The more steepened we get in our false pride, the more kindly do we look down, when unobserved, and kiss the trusting childish face uplifted to ours and sigh and wonder, and sigh again as we think how short-lived purity really is.

She finally glanced up, our eyes met and we both suddenly became very interested in the horizon.

“I think the afternoon will be splendid,” she volunteered.

“Yes,” I returned.

Quiet reigned for five minutes, during which we inspected the water. Then, somehow, we both happened to glance up at the same time and looked straight into each other's eyes.

It was very embarrassing.

We then analyzed the wooden flooring of the deck as minutely as possible.



"Let us go to the other side," I suggested as we accidentally encountered eyes for the third time, "where we may be more in the shade."

For it so happened we had been sitting directly in the heat of the sun, yet, neither of us complained!

We arose and crossed the deck; she first, I following and noticing how neatly her brown skirt, constructed of some soft material, fell in graceful folds from her trim waist, and glancing, carelessly of course, at her brown hair, which tossed about her shoulders in a manner both picturesque and delightful.

There is no woman, in my opinion, who can dress as well, as cheaply and can look as thoroughly bewitching as can the average actress attired for the street, or bent, as was Miss Barbury, on a mission of pleasure. Actresses seem, as a rule, to have a better knowledge of "how to look well" than the remainder of woman kind. I think every unprejudiced person who has taken any especial note of woman's costume will agree with me in this.

We had just seated ourselves when we heard a rush of many feet on the deck below, a hum



of voices, a stamping of feet on the stairs and presently Miss Phialgirl, accompanied by that important person, the manager of the Liston theatre, followed by the remaining members of the Liston stock company made their appearance. They were all there, even to the call boy and the fourth assistant of the property man.

Some people can be disgustingly disagreeable when they desire, and on this occasion Miss Phialgirl evidently decided to be so.

"Quite a happy pair," she observed, accompanying her remarks with a stage laugh trumped up for this occasion only, "sorry to interrupt what must have been an interesting *historie amoureuse*."

This was certainly embarrassing and when accompanied by a laughing chorus of gibbering idiots, made all the more so.

"Don't interrupt the dears," called out Slaggers, who was in the rear ranks (Slagger's humor is vile). Cue for chorus of idiots.

About the most abominable person on the face of the earth is the man who was never possessed of the energy to be successful in love



or anything else, and grumbles at every other man's good fortune. This sort of being will be found everywhere—at the Trevi fountain and among the fishing smacks of Cape Cod; in Siam and the South Sea islands. If you make a fortunate business turn he growls and remarks that you have no right making money. If you scribble an unpretentious book and the pretentious public are fools enough to purchase it, he will walk twenty blocks to volunteer his opinion of the literary offspring. If you control a newspaper and give the world something to think over in an article from your pen, he will ask, sneeringly, why people make all this fuss over something a schoolboy might easily do. If he growls his way into heaven, it's dimes to dollars he'll complain because it wasn't the other place. This is the person who could see nothing very wonderful in Alexander weeping for more worlds to conquer—hadn't he heard of children crying for the moon, and where was the difference?

Weskitt, our leading heavy, came obligingly to the rescue just as the chorus had reached "high C" by slipping down on the deck,



which had been freshly waxed that morning. He presented a ludicrous figure as he sat there, his eyes fairly protruding and his short legs thumping the wooden boards vigorously. His efforts to arise were very laughable, he joining in the laughter as heartily as those around him, motioning away any one who offered to assist him, saying he preferred to "speak his own lines" and that this was a practical way of teaching one to be easy at the "business." Mr. Weskitt finally succeeded in getting on his feet and both ordeals were over.

After this, we amused ourselves walking about the deck, commenting on the weather, the water, the boat, and other unimportant and trivial things until the captain's voice was heard calling out the regulation orders for all to get on board — seemingly an unnecessary precaution since all who had intended to go were evidently on board and there was no one around the docks.

Miss Barbury and I strolled to the lower deck and were interestingly watching the preparations for putting off. The plank had just been raised and the whistle given a warning



"toot," when I observed a gentleman, carrying in one hand an umbrella and in the other a small lunch basket, running toward the dock. He gestured wildly, now with his basket and again with his umbrella, his arms working in a manner similar to a two-sailed wind-mill.

"Wait," he shouted.

Just as he came within a short distance of the landing, he tripped and fell. The whistle gave a farewell scream, and the boat moved slowly away from the landing. By the time the stranger resumed an upright position and gathered up his umbrella and basket, the boat was fully twenty feet away. He rushed down to the edge of the landing, looked toward the boat in a wild manner, suddenly gave both umbrella and basket a fling in our direction, and amid cries of horror, entreaties and warnings, stepped on the railing which surrounded the wharf and jumped toward the boat.

It was decidedly the most indiscreet action I ever witnessed.

He fell short of the boat about five feet, hitting the water with a loud splash.



Being skilled in the art of swimming, I lost no time in throwing off my coat and going to the rescue of the unfortunate man.

Now, I would like to ask any interested person to calmly consider, and after doing so, express their opinion as to the bravery of this act. To be sure, I rescued a drowning man. Mark, however, the circumstances; I was attired in clothes as light as I could have worn; the day was intensely hot; my plunge into the water was thoroughly refreshing and I enjoyed it to the utmost; I was an expert swimmer and it was therefore no effort for me to do the act — in brief, it was the most natural thing in the world, to go to the rescue of this foolish person who had attempted to catch the boat. In addition to this there were at least fourteen men on board who would have done precisely the same thing had I not anticipated them, (two boat-hands had, I may state, made ready to jump, one nearly over-balancing himself so eager was he, just as he saw me leap) and performed a deed which I have always most sincerely regretted.

The stranger was just sinking when I reached him. Grasping the man by his shoulder I



swam with him in the direction of the "Thespian;" a rope was thrown out, and fastening the body of the "rescued" I shouted for those above to hoist, which they did, while I paddled in the water until my turn should come—and I must confess I enjoyed the paddling. When I reached the deck the first person to greet me was Miss Barbury, who declared, in the presence and hearing of the entire company, that she had been very anxious about me. There was an expression in her eyes I was pleased to observe, and I should have liked nothing better than to have spoken with her alone for about five minutes, for I am sure a certain question I should have propounded during the brief interview would have been answered in a way I am confident would have delighted me. Being surrounded by members of the company, who were confoundedly free with their encomiums of praise, I could not do so however, and so, thanking her warmly for her expression of regard, I hurried toward the cabin to obtain a change of clothing. Near the door of that room I came in contact with the person I rescued, and although I am no close student of human nature



and scarcely ever "analyze" those with whom I come in contact, I was prompted to take a hasty inventory of this man. He was of medium build, stooped considerably, had a cleanly-shaven, sharply defined face, eyes of a blackish-green shade and an abundant growth of reddish-brown hair, shockingly disarranged by the water. He was attired in loose garments—evidently a cast-off suit of one of the boat-hands—which fitted him but ill indeed. He was, altogether, the most odd-looking man I ever beheld. The moment this freak of human nature saw me he placed his large bony hands on my shoulders and looking at me with his little greenish eyes, exclaimed with enthusiasm.

"Hero, noble young man, how can I ever feel that I have recompensed you for your valiant act in saving my life? For sacrificing your interests to save me from the terror of drowning?"

"My dear fellow," I said, "it's of no consequence—"

"Ah, my heroic young person, you are very much in the wrong when you consider it in that



way. You underestimate your glorious deed. Gallant, courageous, brave, chivalrous, ind — ”

“ I feel greatly flattered at the praise you bestow,” I interrupted, “ but would you mind discontinuing any further remarks until I can procure a change of clothing? I am dripping wet, and since I see you have been fortunate to find dry palliment, will you not permit me to do the same?”

“ Ah, chivalrous man, you do not realize how I appreciate your noble self-sacrifice—but I will allow you to do as you desire. You should be clothed in gold, with ornaments of pearls and diamonds. My card—my card, here is my card—take it, I regret it is nothing more valuable but it is all I have—I lost my lunch basket in the river.”

I laughed outright at this, judging I should much prefer the card to the lunch basket.

“ Ah, you laugh, my hero; did you but know what that basket contained you would not thus make sport.”

“ I am sorry I have offended you and regret that you have lost anything valuable,” I hastened to say. Misfortune is a very laughable thing to all — but those it overtakes.



“Sandwiches and bottled cider, of which I am passionately fond — both are gone, but then my life is spared.”

I turned abruptly and entered the cabin, knowing I should again offend him by laughing did I longer remain. I changed the clothing I had so proudly attired myself in early that morning, for a suit the captain kindly accommodated me with and then started deckward. As I opened the door of the cabin I bethought me of the card, and knowing the enthusiastic stranger would thereafter desire to be addressed by name should I meet him — which I devoutly hoped I should not — I took the precaution to glance at the pasteboard. I read:

JUSTIN SIGISMUND KOHLER,

America and Elsewhere.

The last inscription seemed rather peculiar and I hurried to the deck to find Miss Barbury, wondering what business Mr. Kohler could be engaged in that induced him to have his cards written, “America and Elsewhere.”



## II.

The voyage up the river was made a perfect agony as long as Kohler remained on the boat. It became ineffably sickening to hear the man laud me so, for after a time he became a bore and finally an unbearable nuisance. I was "hero-ed" until I began wishing myself in a hundred of other places rather than on board the "Thespian." I could have stepped deliberately up to Kohler and knocked him down; once I became imbued of the idea of searching him out,—reversing the order of affairs for once—luring him to the vessel's side and throwing him overboard. Many other devices for disposing of him came to mind, but they were set aside upon his volunteering the information, after having "stumbled across" me for the twenty-sixth time, that he intended to disembark at a small village three miles further on up the river. This announcement probably saved his life; he would have been strangled had I learned he intended to go the entire distance and then return.



I realized in the midst of my good fortune at so getting rid of my detested acquaintance, that before bidding me an *au revoir*, he would desire to consume fully half an hour's time in informing me of my possession of a brave heart and dwelling upon my heroic action in rescuing him from a watery sepulchre. Therefore, I determined to avoid this interesting and dramatic event if there was any possibility whatever of my doing so. How was it to be managed? Pondering for some minutes, and finally coming to no definite conclusion, I confided in Miss Barbury.

"You must conceal yourself in some way," she said decisively; continued "stumblings" induced her to dislike the subject of our conversation fully as much as I.

"Where?" was my question. I had conceived this idea before questioning her and after some consideration given it up as impracticable. The boat was a queerly constructed affair much different from those I had before observed. It was strictly an excursion steamer, evidently not designed for an all night cruise, there being no sleeping apartments whatever. There were, to



be sure, two decks, an upper and a lower, but no place of concealment was observable on either; the upper was but a small affair, in reality a mere platform, smooth as glass, with a few chairs placed upon it, and the lower, although much larger, was equally as unfortunate as regarded hiding places.

"Can you not crawl under the seats surrounding the lower decks?" she questioned.

"No; you can see they are not draped." They were little better than benches in truth.

"The engine room?"

"No place there — except within the boiler and that would be too decidedly tropical."

The outlook was a gloomy one indeed.

A pause. I saw Kohler approaching, smiling as ever and pretending to be engrossed with a portion of the vaulted heavens. I piloted my companion to the opposite side of the deck where we seated ourselves. Fortunately Kohler became involved in a slight dispute with the captain regarding the landing place and did not at once overtake us. The escape was a narrow one.

"How will the cabin do?" asked Miss Barbury at last.



This was a compartment about as large as a smoking room in a Pullman vestibule. It contained a small table, a narrow sofa, one chair and a wardrobe. I enumerated the furniture and reminded my companion there was little space in which to conceal oneself.

"You could get under the table and pull the cloth covering down, or you could crawl under the lounge, or, better still, hide in the wardrobe."

The last suggestion seemed best, and we went to the cabin to see what facilities for hiding the wardrobe afforded. They were few — none, to be precise. A man couldn't live in the narrow place ten minutes, and Kohler would be on hand with a farewell address half an hour before he landed. A suit of clothes would present a sorry appearance after being placed in the sarcastically named cabinet, and just what figure a human being would cut, I did not like to consider. Therefore this project had to be abandoned. And, after all, I considered it would be best not to attempt concealment. If Kohler desired to see me and bid me farewell before he departed from the boat, he would undoubtedly, detective like, "ferret me out"



and do so. Yet, I thought, the trial would be a tedious one, and I had learned to so thoroughly abhor the man that I became actually afraid to trust myself with him. No, I decided after reflection, I would not risk it.

I could not define my hatred for this man — for hatred it had grown, and a hatred more bitter than I ever conceived before. It seemed instinctive, yet I knew not why. We have all experienced this, and likes and dislikes are (as was the intuition of the bad boy to steal), “born in us;” in some more strongly than in others. Many learn to control it; some are of such a temperament as to make control impossible.

I glanced at my watch and discovered it was nearly two o'clock. In thirty minutes Kohler would depart from the boat. I was in a state of total despair. Miss Barbury sat on the miniature article of furniture ironically styled the lounge, and I sat opposite to her on a chair. Both maintained a gloomy silence, our minds dwelling on the one puzzling question, how I was to escape an irksome farewell. Suddenly a voice was heard above the din on the upper deck.



"My life, my preserver, my hero; where is he, that I may once more look upon his features, his classic profile, ere I depart. Ah! h —"

I shut out the detested sound by closing the cabin door.

"Great heaven! what shall I do?" was my despairing question. Miss Barbury shook her head. A short pause, and then footsteps were heard near the top of the short flight of stairs leading down to the cabin door. They were Kohler's. He was too near for me to hope for escape now, and I realized I would be obliged to see it through. Then the steps came nearer — were plainly audible coming down the stairs. I turned the key in the door, locking it noiselessly. Suddenly Marion arose. Her eyes were bright, and there was a determined look in them as she went toward the door.

"Don't open it — for heaven's sake don't open it!" I gasped.

"I do not intend to; leave this matter to me," she whispered. "I have thought of something. It may not be effective, but I most earnestly hope it will, for your sake."

For my sake! I hoped so too—more earnestly.



There came a slight knock at the door; then a pause; then a heavier knock. Then there were intervals of knocks and pauses for several minutes. Finally Miss Barbury asked:

“Who is there?”

“It is I — Kohler — I wish to see my preserver — my hero.”

“There are two gentlemen here (heaven forgave her for that lie, I am sure), Mr. Marlton and —”

“It is he. Ah, my dear young lady, he is the—”

“Hush!” commanded Miss Barbury, “you must be calm; he is subject to fits and has just recovered from one; they are the outcome of his contact with water. A physician is working over him now; he is very weak; if you have any regard for him whatever I beg you to go away. He must not be excited. Should he hear your voice he would at once desire to see you, to talk with you, and a conversation with anyone, no matter how brief, would quite undo him.”

“Can I not for one instant look upon the features of my preserver? I must shortly depart; I beseech you let me not thus leave him.”



"You cannot possibly talk with him," responded this modern Sapphira, "the physician has just succeeded in quieting him; he is sleeping and must not be disturbed."

"Ah, this is sad; but fair maid, I will not attempt to enter. *Adieu, adieu*—no not *adieu* but *au revoir*, my hero, *au revoir*" and so saying, he tiptoed up the stairs.

"It was very wrong I know," said Miss Barbury as she turned from the door, "but it was the only way."

"I think under the circumstances, the recording angel will let this pass," I remarked laughingly.

"I sincerely hope so," was the reply. She went to the door and opened it cautiously as though fearing Kohler was on the outside. Seeing the coast clear, she said:

"I think I will go up now—he will land in a little while; you remain here and I will inform the company of the *ruse* so they will not be alarmed at any report that man may make. "Then," and she hesitated, "there might be gossip you know."

To be sure, great embarrassment might ensue



should any one—especially one inclined to gossip—find us together in the cabin. Scandal is a monster to be avoided in all professions, especially the dramatic, where it has defiled more pure and true characters, than in any other. God help an honest woman, be she ever so noble as a woman and actress, when the scandal mongers of the dramatic profession attack her!

Miss Barbury walked upstairs and I closed the door, turning the key in the lock.

I passed some minutes reading a newspaper I was fortunate enough to discover in the cabin—or rather, attempting to read it, for I was too decidedly nervous to become interested in the contents. Finally the boat seemed to slacken in speed and finally stopped altogether. Then I knew the time for Kohler's departure had at last arrived. I heard a noise outside the cabin door and recognized Kohler's and Miss Barbury's voices raised in dispute. Instinctively I rushed to the door to assure myself it was locked.

“My dear young lady I must see him before I go—”



“Indeed you cannot; I have already told you of his ill condition. He is actually so weak he can hardly talk and an interview with you would end his life.”

The recording angel could bring nothing to bear against this last remark, truly.

Kohler still persisting however, walked stumblingly down the stairs and knocked at the cabin door. As he did so the voice of the captain was heard.

“If you wish to land sir, you will do well to hurry — we cannot possibly wait longer.”

Kohler sighed — so deeply it was plainly audible to me, and then I heard the footsteps retreating up the stairs. A sound of creaking pulleys, a heavy fall, then a voice which I recognized as Kohler’s bidding an *adieu*, and the boat moved on. I unlocked the door and walked to the upper deck where I encountered the company lunching. Miss Barbury had informed them of the *ruse* and they entered into the matter heartily, doing much to keep Kohler away from the cabin by alluding to the “poor fellow” and averring that “the water did it.” I seated myself among the rest and was liberally helped



to the tempting viands that assist in making an out-of-door bill of fare delicious, while we all proceeded to discuss the new acquaintance of mine. It must be chronicled to our discredit — if discredit it was — that Kohler's shortcomings were dealt with in no very favorable terms by the little band, and several allusions to his general make-up called forth such merriment that I soon found I had drowned the unpleasantness of the afternoon in the discussion of the very instrument of that unpleasantness. If we all were acquainted with what transpired behind our backs, concerning ourselves, what a difference it would make among the people of earth ! We should need no churches, no ministers. Even the old women gossips would learn to bridle their tongues and every human boat would have smooth sailing. People would have to think then and confine their thoughts inward. What an immense amount of brain work some would have — after they got used to it; and before they did become accustomed, how our ears would ring !

After luncheon we separated, strolling about the deck in couples, Miss Barbury, of course,



accompanying me. Never did time pass so pleasantly as on that summer afternoon. We landed at a delightfully rural out-of-the-way place, a portion of an estate that had evidently seen its best days many years before. To the little company of actors, the outing was a delightful recreation. A *matinée*, in truth, they seldom enjoyed; the scene comes over me as in a dream, the sweet scented woods, the supreme quietness o'er everything, enhanced by the drowsy hum of the bees and the ripple of the brook. It was a perfect day, yet, with me, something was wanting — something to enter my life.

We are always waiting, and wanting, and wondering. We look on the imperial, cold-blue mountains and wonder what is on the other side; it seems the world must be brighter there, that life must be happier. And when the sun rises far away from nature's massive upheavals and the morning beams touch the snow-capped peaks, the jutting, uneven crags, the sunshine seems to slant down into a valley of perpetual glory, where worry and trouble are unknown components. Yet we usually make the world what it is — gloomy, dreadful and dreary, like



the storm among the pines, or bright, glad and beaming, like the sun lighting a glittering cavalcade.

It was with reluctance we crossed the plank on to the steamer one hour later — the time had passed so pleasantly, the world had seemed so full of love, of harmony and peace. The journey down the river was a quiet one, the spell of the midsummer afternoon remaining upon us. Miss Barbury sat at one side of the boat, gazing thoughtfully at the water for nearly all the way; I was near her, yet we spoke but little. Of what did she think? Of what did I? It was an opportune moment, for love was at our side.

No moralist or ethnologist will ever properly solve this riddle of love; Love, roguish, mischievous Love, that comes upon us like a merry brigand on the mountain highway and demands our hearts ere we pass on. Love that reddens the cheeks of our youngsters, brightens the eyes and causes the blood to tingle in the veins of our youths and maidens, our grandams and grandsires. Love, the old, old fashioned love that makes life worth living after all.



### III

The signal bell for the rising of the curtain at Liston's theatre sounded half an hour later than usual that evening. The audience was composed of good-natured people, however, who waited patiently through the delay and expressed no dissatisfaction. The "bill" for the evening was Gilbert's ever delightful "Broken Hearts," a singularly touching and pathetic drama, and one of absorbing interest. But six members of the large stock company were in the cast, but those, nevertheless, not identified with the production, viewed the play from the wings, with some interest, among them Miss Barbury. I was the Mousta of the evening—a thankless part to many, but to me, one I appreciated in every way and in which I had always desired to appear. At the rise of the curtain, Mousta, it may be remembered by those who have read, or better still, been fortunate enough to witness this poetic



play, is reading a book of charms which he discovered in an empty boat, near the shore of the "Isle of Broken Hearts." I was standing in the wings, conversing with Miss Defnor, the actress who was to appear as Lady Vivian, when the curtain bell sounded. Obeying the play-book directions, I proceeded to the center of the stage and when the curtain rose, Moustas, a deformed, ill-favored dwarf, hump-backed and one-eyed, was discovered, seated near a fountain, reading a small black letter volume." There was a rustle of admiration and applause as the curtain swung up, revealing a scene that was indeed a marvel of the scenic art. In these days of the Nineteenth century, the scene painter has almost as conspicuous a place in the world of the theatre as the actor himself. There has been a cry raised of late, and in America in particular, of too little show of acting and too great a show of scenery. This, in many instances, is only too true — and being true, most deplorable, yet I do not think the evil as widespread as some garrulous critics would make it out. Advances in the art of scene painting have been very rapid of late years, yet I cannot believe the art of acting



has suffered to any great extent by this—it has, rather, been assisted. The decline of the drama is not due to the advance in scenic matters,—a more glaring evil than that is drawing the drama down; one I do not intend to discuss. Is there anything more pleasing than a good drama, well acted, in which the scenic accessories assist in making up a picture that is real, that glows with life, presenting to the auditors the play with its nearest approach to realism—almost realism itself?

I delivered my opening lines with ease, and was rapidly approaching the words forming the cue for Vavir's entrance, when, glancing up from the book I gazed for a moment at the audience, noticing for the first time that the theatre was crowded in every part. The glance was not of a second's duration — as quick as the eye could rise and fall — yet, when I again looked at the book I felt somehow I was a changed being. How, I could not at once say. A shock of the most intense pain passed through me with the rapidity of lightning. My mind became confused and I seemed altogether another being. I attempted to cry out, but



could not make a sound and then I discovered I was repeating my lines as though they were words I would most naturally utter. I glanced around. The landscape was tropical and of the most enchanting beauty. The audience had vanished. I was on an island, eagerly devouring the contents of a book which read like music to me. I realized that of all on this fair spot, the only blemish was hump-backed, ill-favored me. The book I held told me of strange secrets; how to make the crooked straight, transform old to young, heal the lame, restore lost sight — hundreds of marvelous things. I realized I was madly in love with one I could never, by reason of my deformed and repellant state, hope to win. This book taught me to appear pleasing to her eye. The finding of it made me about mad with ecstasy. Through some unaccountable process I had been transformed into the very character I was to interpret, with the same passions, the same thoughts, the same actions of the unsightly Moustá. \* \* \* I cannot dwell upon this wonderful and mysterious transformation of the night. It was something so unreal, so inex-



plicable that I cannot trust myself to do so. When the last words of the beautiful Hilda — a woman of surpassing loveliness, whom I, as my second self, loved with a despair most pitiful — were spoken at the conclusion of the first act, the torturous pain again passed through my body and I was lying in the center of the stage surrounded by a number of people who told me I had fainted; the painted scenes, the flickering lights, the immense canvas drop-curtain — all were there. Anxious faces looked into mine; my companions said “he worked too hard, but it was wonderfully done.” I had evidently awakened from a dream. From the auditorium came sounds, the semblance of which I have never since heard in a theatre. It was applause — something I was entirely familiar with, but not as it was given that night. It was as though the gods of thunder had descended upon earth. Deafening shouts for “Mousta” were heard, and, dazed as though waking from sleep, and scarcely understanding the turmoil, I walked before the curtain. The thunderous applause increased as I came in view of the audience. Cheers seemed to shake the



very foundation of the theatre; hats, handkerchiefs, fans, were waved wildly in the air. Was ever a stage villain accorded such recognition — a recognition only an intelligent audience can give? I retired but was again called forth — again and again did the wild throng demand my presence. The greatest success of my life had been made, a triumph seldom equaled.

When I was at length permitted to retire, and came upon my comrades behind the scenes, congratulations were thrust upon me by every member of the company. It was wonderful, they all avowed, and before I gained the seclusion of my dressing-room, Manager Liston had informed me of an advance in salary. When I had at last been permitted to reach my dressing-room I seated myself upon one of my wardrobe trunks and thought over my evening's success, for truly I had made a success, one that was probably never equaled; but at what cost? how was it brought about? After all had I made this seemingly unparalleled attainment? Was it study — close, arduous, tedious study on my part? No, it could not have been. How-



ever one might absorb oneself in the character represented, no one could be transformed so completely as I was, for my desires, my life itself during that terrible act, was as Moustas would have been. I had rejoiced as an original Moustas would have rejoiced. I had suffered as he doubtless would have suffered, longed as he would have longed, with a longing that was terrible in its pitifulness, for the fulfillment of that which I knew could never be — the bestowment of the love of the fairest creature ever conceived, on the most mis-shapen animal the imagination can conjure up.

I dreaded the sound of the manager's bell and when I heard it ring, stumbled down the steps of the dressing-room and blundered wildly into the wings with a despair no one can fully realize. To the stage hands, and such members of the company as were congregated, my demeanor must have seemed rather peculiar. I experienced no doubt that I would be obliged to go through all my agonies again, during the coming act. It was indelibly, distinctly impressed upon me. I took my proper position in the wings and waited with an indescribable



feeling for the rise of the curtain. When the bell sounded and the enormous painted canvass creaked as it slid slowly up, my heart thumped wildly and my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth as though frozen. I wanted to turn and run, to cry out, to shriek. I was as a statue. Miss Barbury stood beside me. She had been talking with animation since my re-return from the dressing-room, but I had not heeded her.

"What is the matter?" she whispered, and then, noticing the stage had been kept waiting, she, with a promptness born of stage experience, pushed me into view of the audience.

"Stage frightened, this late in your career — your success is turning your head," I heard her say, laughingly, as I stumbled toward the center of the stage. The applause greeting me was deafening and it was several minutes before I could proceed. I uttered my first line, "I left him sleeping soundly in my hut," slowly and indistinctly. As I started upon my second the pain I had been momentarily dreading and expecting shot through me. The landscape assumed more substantial and real proportions as



before. The audience disappeared. Thoughts foreign to my nature flashed into my brain. I was alone. I was my other self.

When I regained consciousness — for I may truly say I was unconscious — the plaudits of the audience again rang in my ears, and, as before, I felt instinctively they were intended for me. The great curtain was pushed aside, and amid the most enthusiastic shouts I walked to the front. Hundreds of faces were turned toward me, and looking across the huge living sea, as it seemed, my eyes rested for a moment upon one face. The applause seemed hushed. I could not hear it, so intense was my interest centered in that face, for I recognized features I can never forget. Through the broad auditorium — so broad one would think no face could be distinguished — I looked straight into the eyes of my demonstrative friend, Kohler. That look convinced me that the secret of my success of the evening was due to him, how I could not explain, but the feeling that it was through his influence the strange events which have been narrated, occurred, was so strong upon me I at once believed the man had some



mysterious control over me which I could not hope to overcome. I roused myself sufficiently to bow myself from view and when again safely behind the scenes conceived a most violent desire to be rid of this man, this acquaintance of a day that had been one of the happiest during my existence. Another metamorphosis such as that which had occurred would, I believed, make me insane. I could not endure the pain, the intense love longing — a longing that would be intensified in the last act of this wonderful drama, since Moustas, as the lines read, would undergo his most loathsome tortures of the heart, and suffer humiliation at the hands of one he could not but look upon as an enemy. How could I now proceed to have Kohler induced to leave the house? I could most certainly complain to Manager Liston, who would willingly request him to depart. I could not, however, give the worthy Mr. L. a plausible reason for my wishing to have him remove the man, nor, after consideration, would it be an advisable thing to do after all, Kohler, with his damnable art of — what I could not say — would in all probability wreak vengeance on



me in some other manner. While pondering thus, the prompt bell rang. Despairingly I realized the tortures felt before would shortly be repeated, and rushed wildly down to the wings. The play was already proceeding, and I idly watched the players as they, through God's blessing, were permitted to only assume the characters they represented, while I, selected for some unknown reason, would be transformed to mine and made to suffer with it. The cue for entrance came, and, prepared for the change before experienced, I, according to stage directions, "stole on from l. u. e." and started with my lines, waiting, momentarily expecting the change to occur. I was astonished to find I had proceeded at some length and yet the horrible metamorphosis had not taken place. I grew bolder, and, with an effort, looked up and, glancing across the theater, saw the seat Kohler had occupied now completely filled by a gentleman of extremely large proportions, whose features I could not distinguish. Kohler had gone then! Realizing this, my heart thumped as wildly with joy as it had a few hours before thumped with fear, and when it



came my cue to reply to my stage companion, I delivered my lines in so joyful a tone that he and every person standing in the wings, all of whom had been watching me admiringly, started in complete surprise.

"Your voice has changed!" my colleague almost gasped, "have you lost the proper tone?"

"No; thank God I have gained it," I replied fervently in a whisper completely audible to those on the stage and in the wings. All exchanged looks of surprise, I noted as I proceeded. In this last act I had not so much to do as in the previous two, and when the time for my final exit came, far from "creeping sadly off" when my "miserable life" had been spared, I almost hopped to the side of the stage and made my exit amid open expressions of horror from my companions and the plaudits of the audience, who, although the most indifferent could not but have noticed the change, did not forget my former triumph and gave me a pleasant little *encore*.

Of course all my companions were "so sorry I had brought such a cold on myself."



My exertions during the first two acts must have been very fatiguing, Mrs. Thompson, the first old lady, thought; and then that wonderful voice; how could one assume it, she would like to know, and not become hoarse? The whole performance was wonderful, wonderful! She had watched it from the wings, having nothing else to do, and thought it was charming — thrilling. She would wish to make just one such triumph and die. She had known of but one like hit before, and that was when poor dear Thompson played “Richard” one night during the days of the strictly legitimate; there were’nt one hundred people in the house on the night of Thompson’s remarkable hit, but they were that enthusiastic they actually thronged on the stage after the death scene and persisted in shaking hands with him. He also was hoarse after the production. Ah, those were the days of the drama, purely the palmy days; the stage could never hope to see them again.

Leaving the conversant old lady rather abruptly I rushed to my dressing room and prepared to disrobe. Scarcely had I gotten within its sacred precincts when a heavy knock



sounded on my door. Upon answering it, I was confronted by a blue-coated messenger boy who handed me a note. It was written upon an official looking sheet of paper, and was from his excellency, the governor of the state! His excellency had witnessed my "wonderful illustration of the powers of dramatic art" and was immensely pleased. Never, he could say, in the course of his life had he beheld such a wonderful performance. He was charmed, entranced, even terrified, so realistic was the impersonation. And would Mr. Marlton be kind enough to join his excellency in an impromptu supper-party at the Cosmopolitan restaurant directly he could? In course of half an hour, say? If Mr. Marlton only would do so, he would be doing what his excellency could only regard as one of the greatest of personal favors. At any other time, I could have accepted such an invitation graciously, and indeed, with a feeling of pride. This considering I had made my success legitimately. That night, I felt I had not done so. It was greatness thrust upon me indeed, but not in a way to inspire hope for further successes.

"Any answer, sir?"



Ah, the messenger. Acting hastily—perhaps too hastily, I seated myself and scribbled an answer, pleading illness and stating I would be only too happy to meet his excellency on any other evening. I most sincerely regretted my inability to be in attendance at the supper party, but would be quite pleased to sup with his excellency at any other time he could arrange.

Dispatching the messenger with the note, I completed dressing and then, descending to the stage door, nodded a good night to the few congregated about it and started for my rooms, situated in a large block some distance from the theatre. Arriving, I found my room-mate had preceded me. Richmond, a tall, finely built young fellow, who was, excepting myself, the only male character in the play that evening, was sitting near the small centre-stand reading a book. Glancing up, as I entered, he threw the volume on the table, re-lighted his cigarette and lying comfortably back in his chair, interrogated: “Your head, my dear boy, still admits of your wearing a hat, corresponding in size with the one you wore earlier in the day?”



"Of course it does, it always will," was the quick, half angry reply. This tale of success was growing tiresome.

"No need of your desiring to annihilate me, I was only joking."

"Rather an antediluvian joke."

"Yes," he admitted, "the hat 'fake' has seen its best days—but I say, honestly, my boy, you did handsomely; that second act was a corker. Why, I was actually afraid of you — and you carried the thing too far, upon my soul you did; sitting moping about in the wings when your exits came, and not speaking to any one who addressed you."

True, my exits. How must I have appeared when not speaking my lines before the audience? I had no recollection of this. I longed to ask how I behaved, yet did not dare to question.

"And once," rattled on Richmond, "when I spoke to you, you gave me such a Dr. Hyde-like look, you scared me into one of the worst breaks I ever made, as I heard my cue just then and was about to go on. What a pile of studying you must have done; oh, you're a lucky dog — but you deserve it all." In this manner



Richmond talked for nearly half an hour, what questions he propounded being answered in monosyllabled form, with frequent insinuations that I was much too fatigued to talk. I had just performed the athletic feat of what is known in America as "jumping into bed" (every American jumps) and was composing myself for sleep when Richmond, who had subsided for a short time, began afresh with the startling suddenness of Vesuvius in eruption.

"Oh, by Jove, I nearly forgot it — here, here is something a gentleman left for you — it was the same man you pulled from the river this morning," he said as he went to a small chest, drew therefrom a brown paper parcel and brought it to the bedside.

A gift from Kohler!

"Let me take it," I said wearily.

Untying the string after some difficulty, and tearing away the paper, a small image, or what I supposed to be an image, rolled from my hands on the coverlet.

"An idol, by Jove" said Richmond, taking it up and examining it curiously. As he did so, I observed the idol was a quaintly carved thing,



evidently designed for a dragon. It was four inches in height, I should judge, and six in length, made of pure white ivory, its claws, teeth and swirling tail of pure, glistening gold, its eyes of sparkling, penetrating rubies. The animal, demon, or whatever you will, was exquisitely carved, the lustre of the polished ivory shining with a dazzling brilliancy.

"It is a beauty," remarked Richmond, transferring it to my hands. I looked it over, noted the finely executed workmanship carefully, revolving in my mind what use under the sun the dainty thing would be to me. It must, I considered, be but an ornament.

Richmond finally took the image from me and placed on the stand beside him, resuming his reading after an eloquent discourse on Kohler's gift. I, looking across the room at the idol, saw the lustrously gleaming eyes and noted how wonderfully they contrasted with the pure white skin and golden tipped claws. There was an irresistible attraction in the fiery orbs, and my persistent gaze directed at them as they finally seemed to change from red to green, green to blue and again to red, dazzled me so I



was impelled to close my eyes, then, acting on the impulse, a drowsy comfortness stole over me, and after a weak command to Richmond to stop reading and come to bed, I fell asleep.



## IV

The little clock on the centre-table chimed twice with a musical, decisive cadence that reverberated throughout the room charmingly. I had been sleeping scarcely an hour, yet felt strangely refreshed; the soft, hazy light of the July moon shone through the open window of the apartment, touched lingeringly upon the furniture and ornaments, softly tipped the white china plate in the corner and tinged all with fanciful gold. Richmond was at my side sleeping peacefully, venting an occasional snore that indicated repose and presumably happiness, forgetful of trouble and toil, of success and failure on the stage of life as well as the mimic world he represented. For a time I lay quietly back on my pillows, weaving fantastic, chimerical shapes in the moon-gold light, but finally arose, and going to the window leaned out over the stony casement and looked at the city as it



lay asleep, gray and quiescent. The gabled quaintness of the buildings never seemed so strikingly beautiful as now, nor the tall spires of the churches standing like sentinels over the sleeping occupants of the vast city, so commanding. Nothing but roofs met the eye; on, on like the waves of the ocean, relieved by the towers of the public buildings and the steeples only. Along the street — *our* street, as Richmond and I were wont to call it — it was very quiet, not a person to be seen, not a noise heard except that low, incessant rumbling, always audible by night in a large city, coming from a seeming nowhere, and always unaccountable — a sound once heard always remembered. The loneliness affected me strangely and I was seized with a desire to stroll along the shadow-barred street — to walk, to go nowhere in particular, but to walk; walk and drive away a fear of impending evil rapidly enveloping me. Hastily dressing, I gently opened and shut the door, that my colleague might not be wakened, walked carefully down the broad stair-case and let myself into the street through a side door which I knew was kept



unlocked. For some time I stood at the edge of the walk undetermined what course to pursue, and finally deciding to walk toward the East, turned my steps upward. The only thing of life on this particular section of the street, so far as I could tell, I found to be a policeman whom I met after having proceeded a block. Patrolman Willis and I were old acquaintances and his cheery "hullo" evinced that he was pleased to have the lonesomeness of his "beat" relieved by some one he could converse with, even if for a brief time only. He expressed no surprise at my being on the street at such an untimely hour and after exchanging the usual compliments we chatted for some time, finally moving on in opposite directions. I had scarcely proceeded two steps when I ran against some person. Strange I had not seen him! I could have sworn there was not a man nor woman on the street — excepting ourselves — when I turned from the officer.

"I beg your pardon," said I, hastily and half angrily. Then I looked up — it was Kohler!

Instinctively I turned around to look for the



policeman, whom I thought could not be very far away, but Willis had disappeared as suddenly as had Kohler appeared.

“I am delighted to meet you — my preserver my hero” — he began, effusively, but stopped at an entreating “don’t” on my part. His sinister face bore a supercilious smile and he glanced down at me with his little, half-closed eyes in a way most revolting, and made me abhor the man more than ever. We walked along some minutes in silence until we reached the end of the short street. At each step my hatred for this man had grown more and more intense. I loathed him, abhorred him with all my soul. Yet I could not turn back, could not seek the seclusion of my room as I desired — he seemed to hold some mysterious power over me, impelling me to do as he wished.

“We will turn down this street,” he said. We turned as he indicated. How I hated him!

“Some day I shall kill you,” said I, finally, my hatred growing irritating, my displeasure stronger. Kohler simply laughed and did not appear in the least alarmed at the threat al-



though uttered in all earnestness. It was a disgusting, dry, cackling laugh and made my blood boil.

"You cannot kill me," he said, leering with his little gray eyes and cackling with satisfaction. I turned white with passion—a fury raged within me and I would have struck him down, could I have raised my arms; they hung like leaden weights at my sides.

"You have bewitched me," I cried.

"Yes, bewitched you, if you desire to call it that. There is no necessity for shouting so—it will only cause unnecessary trouble; I can stop your vocal organs also." We walked on in silence and several blocks further down stopped—at least Kohler stopped and I could not do otherwise. On the corner opposite from which we stood was the immense banking establishment of Brown & Brown, a handsome stone, solidly built building, doubly imposing by night with its richly carved, luxuriously appointed interior, brilliantly lighted by almost innumerable incandescent illuminators.

"Light is a better safeguard against thieves than all the watchmen in the universe," Mr.



James Brown, senior member of the firm once remarked, and firmly believing in it, placed these glowing globes in all prominent portions of the banking institution. Mr. David Brown, junior member, still advocated the watchman theory, and, while he acknowledged his brother had taken a wise step, nevertheless insisted in retaining "Faithful James," who had been identified with the Browns since they were boys, played as brothers, fought as brothers, and stuck to each other with a tie none could undo, even after their "growing up." Therefore the bank was lighted and guarded, and stood a monument to the Browns' thrift, a credit to a large city and a terror to designing thieves and cracksman.

Taking a large bunch of keys from his pocket, and selecting one in particular, Kohler handed them to me and said, lowly, but clearly and distinctly: "You will take this key, insert it in the lock of the front door of the bank across the way, enter and ——"

"This is preposterous — I shall do nothing of the kind."

"You will," came the firm reply and the man's eyes glittered ominously.



I grew livid with fury and maddened by the insolent bearing of the man, attempted to jump toward him — I could have strangled him. He caught my hands and I became as weak as a child.

“You are in my power,” he said, raspingly, “do as I command; I shall give you no further orders in person, my thoughts will hereafter guide you in the transaction of this business.” Then my mind became slightly obscured — clouded as when one cannot reason clearly.

Dreamily I took the proffered keys, started across the street, and reaching the massive door of the great banking edifice, inserted the key in the lock, half expecting, earnestly hoping, it would not fit. The unshapely steel “sesame” to this cave of riches, snugly filled the aperture for which some skillful locksmith had designed it however, and with slight exertion on my part the door swung noiselessly open, but, upon my entrance, closed with a loud reverberating slam.

“Who is there?” immediately exclaimed a commanding voice, and a moment later a tall, swarthy, muscular watchman, pistol in hand,



came from one of the inner offices of the bank. What answer could I make? I attempted to retrace my steps, but found some mysterious power propelled them forward, and I advanced toward the guardian of the Browns' wealth.

“Halt!”

It was an imperious command, and the possessor of the weapon had a most determined look; it was evident he considered me an expert bank robber, and a remark he shortly made convinced me of it.

“Don't come a step further. Where are your pals?”

I was in a painful predicament certainly. After a moment it occurred to me to say “Kohler” and inform the watchman he was across the street. I was in trouble of a most serious nature — would probably be taken before some dignitary to give an account of my actions; there would be a great amount of satisfaction in drawing Kohler before the Court. Deciding to pursue this course, I attempted to speak, but as I did so, the watchman suddenly started back with a pale face, his eyes



staring horribly and his muscles twitching convulsively, then collapsing, he sank on the tile floor, the pistol falling at my feet. Impelled by some stronger will, I moved on past the prostrate body, through the softly carpeted apartments of the great financial directors shaded by innumerable soft-falling lights, through the neatly arranged rooms of the bookkeeper, finally running almost directly against the large iron door of the vault. Further impelled by this wonderful Will, I turned to the big steel combination lock, reversed it twice, pulled on the knob of the door, and it swung easily outward. "There is a box—a box—a box" kept running through my brain; I was after a box, and would know it the moment I saw it, of this I felt assured. I found it necessary to open a small safe which stood at the farthest end of the vault and then I discovered the box; it was small, of japanned tin, and reminded me greatly of the make-up case in my dressing room at the theater. It was much heavier, though, and was evidently filled with coin—gold, perhaps. Lifting it from the floor where I had placed it while closing the door of the



safe, I walked outside the vault and closed the door of that also. Suddenly the Will impelled me to hurry — “Somebody is coming ; hurry, hurry, hurry,” ran the words through my head. I rushed through the gilded apartments, past the prostrate form of the watchman, the horribly contracted face of whom I could not fail to observe even in my haste — and into the warm air of the July night. “Faster — faster,” ran the message through my brain, and I hastened to obey it, running at headlong speed in the direction of an alley across the street, where I could see, dimly outlined against a high brick wall, the form of the one who had provoked this dastardly deed — the man who had molded my actions as he would a piece of putty. A pistol shot rang out upon the still air, then another and another, and then a shrill police whistle was heard. I reached the passage and would have fallen exhausted, but for Kohler, who grasped me by the arms, and relieving me of my burden hurried me onward. I was breathless, terrorized. The footsteps of pursuers gained rapidly upon us, and a command to “stop or I fire,” came clearly to my ears.



Then I sank down—down—down—the world seemed slipping from beneath me, and I fell into blackish space.

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“Great Scott!” growled a voice in my ear, “what’s the matter with you? I’ve been trying to sleep for the last hour, and you’ve kicked around and carried on in such a manner as to drive all thoughts of the drowsy god from my mind. Give me some more clothes!” said Richmond, in desperation, reaching across my body and pulling the bedclothes from the floor where they had fallen. It was yet night, and the moon shone as mellow as before, only further down in the heavens.

“Have you been dreaming?” queried Richmond, arranging the coverings, which he had secured after an extra brilliant plunge.

“Thank God, yes!” I replied fervently. I was in a heavy sweat, great drops of perspiration standing on my flesh, my body trembling as with ague. At my reply, Richmond sat up in bed, bolstered himself against the carved head



and looked earnestly at me for several minutes. Then he arose, raised the south window, pulled down the curtains further and returned to bed.

“Les’, you’re a d—— fool,” he said; and drawing the coverings over his head, as was his custom no matter how warm the night, he composed himself for sleep. I began to think my companion had spoken correctly.

“Three!” chimed out the clock.

“Hear that?” propounded Richmond, sleepily; “you’ll never let me get to sleep.”



## V

Richmond and I must have awaked almost simultaneously with the sharp decisive rap on the hall door.

"Eleven o'clock — time to get up," came the voice of the hall boy — invariably the same command that followed his knock every morning.

Richmond was out of humor. "He might just as well say 'Eleven o'clock,' and go away: we know it's 'time to get up,'" he growled, as we both got out of bed and prepared to dress.

During the night the weather had changed, and instead of the hot, dusty day we had expected would follow from the outlook of the heavens when we retired, it was dreary and gloomy, with a dismal, incessant rain, hardly perceptible, yet which succeeded in thoroughly soaking everything and everybody out of doors — one of those drizzling, persistent



rains so thoroughly disagreeable that it succeeds in making everything else disagreeable, as though that were its mission.

"Nice morning to walk to the restaurant," complained Richmond, after he had completed his toilet and stood contemplating the street through one of the windows.

"We can ride," returned I, throwing on my rubber coat and preparing for the unpleasant siege. Richmond followed suit, and we were soon in a practically empty car, rattling away on our journey to the modest *cafe* where we usually breakfasted. On one of the street corners the car stopped to admit two gentlemen, plainly dressed, who, on depositing the customary American coin necessary to insure their transit seated themselves directly opposite us. One of the men, a strong-looking, intelligent appearing person, regarded me very intently for some time, and finally, nudging his companion, whispered a few words to him. Then both stared at me, and, I must confess, made me feel rather uncomfortable under their searching gaze. They had probably, I considered, seen me at the theater the night before, and, ungentlemanly



though it was, took this method of showing their appreciation, or rather, wonderment. They noted everything about me, evidently—from top to toe, nothing escaped their rigid scrutiny. The ungentlemanly conduct of the pair aroused my anger, and when I pulled the bell strap as the car drew near the restaurant I could not refrain the somewhat old but nevertheless appropriate observation, “Well, sirs, I sincerely trust you will know me on first sight when we meet again.” The man with the dark moustache was a little disconcerted at this, but his companion, on the contrary, laughed and said, “We most certainly shall.” I walked stiffly to the door, preceded by Richmond, who on stepping from the platform of the car to the muddy sidewalk, growled, “Idiots! They seem to have no more respect than a second-class burlesque super.”

Seated within the cozy *cafe*, Richmond’s ill temper relaxed a little, and by the time the appetizing breakfast was placed before him, it was wholly gone.

“The *Herald-News*,” he remarked, as he placed a paper he had been perusing down



beside him, and took up his knife and fork, "give you an elegant 'send off'—'finest thing ever witnessed' and all that, you know."

"So does the *Examiner*," I replied, taking up the paper Richmond laid aside. The paper fairly teemed in fact, with praises in my behalf—enough to turn any one's head not used to such things. It is very pleasant to read that "Mr. So-and-so's conception of the part was a revelation—the difficult character never being so truthfully presented as it was last evening," old as the story may be.

"You will pardon my uncultivated taste, I know," remarked Richmond, "but I do admire slang—every one uses it and every one else is shocked when they hear it used. You will pardon me then, I say, when I use the term *roden-tia*, in connection with dramatic critics; perhaps I should say simulated critics. Did I desire, I could name you seventy dramatic critics in the world; the remainder are amateur newspaper reporters—'journalists,' I believe they dub themselves. The competent critic and the real dramatic writer are better conversant with the stage and requirements of a part than the average



intelligent actor himself, for he has noticed much and studied much, and gauges by the law, of silent comparison. Comparisons are not odious unless carried to extremes, for without the right of comparison dramatic critics would attend the theatre prepared to gauge an actor by a visionary ideal, and no one ever realized a critic's ideal; for, although idealism is, to a small extent necessary, it should never carry one's better sense away. You cannot expect young men and boys fresh from colleges and public schools to occupy the critic's chair at a theatre and properly fulfill a critic's functions. Yet they are attempting to do this every day in the year. They will treat a comic opera in the same manner they would a tragedy—to them there is no leap between King Lear and The Mikado. They always condemn the minor faults but are not intelligent enough to know the glaring improprieties. If an actress, through haste, confuses her words, they will let the world know it; if she reads three hundred lines with the wrong impression of their meaning, these 'critics' are not aware of it. They are always writing about 'tearing passion to tatters,' yet



really cannot distinguish skillfully assumed rage from rant. The statute books contain no clause restricting amateur criticism and therefore we are deluged with it. These people praise indiscriminately and condemn without reason, omnivagant as to thought. You have heard of the one man power? Well, you need but a single season on the road to convince you it is predominant in our interior towns and cities. It is the man exalted to the position of 'local' on the daily paper in an unpretentious city of, say 12,000 souls. He is the 'Pooh Bah' of the newspaper kingdom in that section—horse editor, snake editor, court editor, morgue editor and sporting editor—never 'a reporter.' When he enters the local theatre, where a mediocre attraction holds forth two nights during a week, he constitutes himself the dramatic critic and on the following morning you may learn you mistook your calling when you entered on a stage career, and that the author of the play, whether a Shakspeare or a Hoyt, is a plagiarist, if not a horse-thief; he tells you this in horrible English with a sprinkling of worse French. It never occurs to this man to 'report' a play—it is always



'criticism;' so he blunders on, the laughing stock of the true dramatic writer and the theatre-goers who really know better themselves.

There was something else that attracted my attention in the *Herald-News* beside the dramatic criticism, however. It had a "sensation," a double-leaded "sensation." Moreover, the sensation was a "scoop," for not a line did the *Examiner* contain concerning it. There was only half a column, but it was sufficient to make my blood run cold as I read it, from the very first sensational headline to the cruel little period that ended the whole article.

### DARING BANK ROBBERY!

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THE BANK OF BROWN & BROWN ENTERED AT  
AN EARLY HOUR AND \$12,000 SECURED.

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### THE PERPETRATOR OF THE DEED

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KILLS THE WATCHMAN TO GAIN HIS END  
AND SAFELY MAKES HIS ESCAPE.

"At half past two o'clock this morning one of the most daring robberies ever committed in this



city was perpetrated at Brown and Brown's Banking establishment on Lexington street. At about the time mentioned, Patrolman Newton, who was walking down the street, and was three doors from the edifice, noticed a man coming out of the bank, carrying in his right hand a tin box. Suspecting something was wrong the officer called out for him to stop. Instead of doing so, the man ran swiftly across the street and joined a companion in the shadow of a building opposite. The two then ran down an alley and were lost to sight. Patrolman Newton followed for a short distance, discharging several shots in the direction of the men. A number of other officers who had been called to the scene by Patrolman Newton's whistle, followed in the direction indicated, but could not even trace the footsteps of the robbers.

"A search at the bank evinced that the robber had gained an entrance through the front door, probably with a skeleton key. The dead body of the bank watchman, James Hoy, was found on the tile flooring, his face frightfully discolored. A hasty examination, however, brought



to light no marks of violence on the body. Mr. James Brown, senior member of the firm, was at once summoned and a search instituted. The door of the iron vault was found to be unlocked, although securely closed. The door of a small safe on the inside was partly ajar and a box containing \$12,000, belonging to a private depositor, abstracted.

"Patrolman Newton gave a very comprehensive description of the man he saw making his exit from the bank and his capture may shortly be effected."

"It's about time you ceased reading such flattery or your head will surely be turned," remarked Richmond, looking up. "My God, old fellow, what's the matter with you?" Genuine feeling for me prompted this remark of Richmond's for I must have looked ill indeed. My hands trembled violently, and a sickening, nauseating pain shot through me.

"I—I am not feeling well," I faltered, "and believe I had better get back to the room."

"I should say you had," said Richmond with much concern, rising from the table. Then a hand touched me lightly on the shoulder and I



looked up with an instinctive foreboding into the dark, handsome face of the man I had seen in the street car. His companion stood by with a supercilious smile and regarded the proceedings with much satisfaction.

"I am Howard Morgan, of the City Detective Service," said the man with the moustache, "and have a warrant for your arrest."

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There was considerable unsuppressed excitement around Liston's theatre that day. Mr. Francis Liston stormed around his cozy office, his hands in his pockets, stoutly affirming "that young man is not guilty — pooh, pooh, bank robbery, what idiot, d— idiot, yes I will say d— idiot if I choose," he remarked, glowering wickedly at his clerk who looked up from his writing in surprise, "what d— idiot, I reiterate, would think of arresting him for robbing a bank — and a raise in his salary made only last night. Why, that young man is on the highway to success — there isn't an unsold seat left in the house for two weeks to come!"



“Bail!” shrieked the little manager when approached later in the day, “of course I’ll give bail—how much do you want, ten thousand, fifty thousand, eighty million or a hundred million,” and he thrust his hand into one of his pockets as though any amount whatever would be forthcoming from that small receptacle, that was demanded. Not finding the requisite sum so conveniently reposing there, however, he sat down at the desk and with a flourish expressing kindness toward me, malignance toward the officers of the law and distrust of things in general, Mr. Liston signed his name to a check, representing several thousands of dollars.

I had suffered the indignity of remaining in a loathsome jail for five hours, while lawyers police officers and judges squabbled over the advisability of letting me roam at large should sufficient security be furnished. The cynical detective who had observed “Mr. Howard Morgan, of the City Detective Force” make my arrest and consequently claimed a hand in it, pictured me, I ascertained, as a low browed, malignant looking person, who would have “no



no hesitancy whatever to jump bail sir." Mr. Morgan, on the contrary, declared it advisable to release me, and further stated Mr. Liston would be "amply good." Finally every one connected with the justice department of the county, from janitor of the Court House to District Judge, it seemed to me, adjourned to take a look at the prisoner, and not deeming him quite as repulsive as the cynical detective would have made him out, consented to release him on proper bail being furnished "pending an investigation."

An hour later I was re-arrested—justice having acted erroneously. Under no circumstances could a murderer be released on bail. It took the District Judge several hours to find this out—he had not "really been sure" on the first occasion, and now must "frankly confess he was in the wrong." They all deserted me and I remained during the night in my cell (as a choice between a pig sty and a prison cell, I prefer the sty) and reflected—that is, reflected as much as my bewildered brain would allow me. Subsequently I was released by a deputy something-or-other from some office of authority.



"I couldn't come this morning or you would have been freed then," said he cheerfully, "I was playing pool."

I simply looked at him and walked out. The slowest thing in time of need, next to a messenger boy, is a person connected with a county sheriff's office.

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The morning after my imprisonment the Coroner's Jury prepared to "sit upon" the body of bank watchman, James Hoy, to ascertain the cause of his death. Two learned men, widely known as distinguished lights in the medical profession were sent to hold a *post-mortem* examination on the remains of said James Hoy. Then something very curious occurred, for the two surgeons had been closeted with the body of the deceased in the cooling room of that most dreadful of all places, the morgue, but five minutes, when Dr. G. Ernest Lushington appeared before the honorable Coroner of the county as he sat demurely in his office, followed almost directly by his colleague. Both were unmistakably excited—excited much beyond the point surgeons are usually supposed to be.



“The man is not dead!” proclaimed Dr. Lushington.

“No,” interposed his companion, “he has been in a comatose state, undoubtedly produced, according to my theory—”

“By a—”

“One at a time,” thundered the Coroner, adding profanely, “d— your theories.” Then, together with the learned gentlemen he went to ascertain the cause of excitement.



## VI

James Hoy was proving a veritable puzzle to the physicians of the state. He was a very important witness in the celebrated Brown bank robbery case, and while beyond the question of a doubt the man was alive, he was certainly not in the possession of his faculties, for no question asked received a reply further than a dull vacant stare from his lack-lustre eyes. He could not talk, could not eat, nor even turn his head one way or the other and the worst of it was James Hoy had lain in this peculiar state for over two months. For two months had the most celebrated physicians in America worked over him, vainly endeavoring to induce him to show some sign of life further than the sluggish beating of his heart. Some said his brain was palsied, some learnedly shook their heads and contradicted this, but



none seemed to know precisely what was wrong with this hitherto unnoticed bank watchman.

And the great bank case was to proceed without him at last!

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Never before had I fully realized how much misery and worry could be crowded into such a seemingly brief time. Nor had I ever known one could gain such widespread notoriety within such time—sixty days before, I was an obscure actor, content to let the world wag, now, according to reports, the most notorious criminal that ever walked the earth. At the very outset I found myself obliged to relinquish my duties at the theatre, despite the plea entered by the worthy manager of that institution that “there wasn’t a seat left in the house unsold for nigh onto seven weeks to come.” Then, reporters, reporters, reporters! They made life a purgatory on earth, a never ending curse as long as I was “under suspicion.” Once, injudiciously, I consented to be “interviewed” by one of these ruthless destroyers of truth, paper and Faber



lead pencils—what I said I never fully knew, so rapidly were the interrogatories of this brilliant gentleman propounded, but of one thing I am certain—that not eight words concerning the alleged robbery passed my lips. Freely did I speak of my youth, my profession, even my age (which I told correctly and without hesitation), but on that one sacred subject I collected my wits enough to remark I had “nothing to say.” Nevertheless the daily *Westend News* in its issue following the interview announced to the world in artistically pyramided headlines that “The Robber Talked,” and further informed its presumably thousands of readers that when a *News* reporter called upon the celebrated bank robber Leslie Marlton, at his office in Liston’s theatre, he was very graciously received, the now famous “gentleman” expressing satisfaction that the *News* with its accustomed enterprise was taking the matter up and would deal honestly and fairly with the case, that, after gracefully motioning the reporter to a seat near him, Mr. Marlton said so-and-so and such was such, and dwelt at much length on the celebrated robbery, regretting extremely



that he was connected with the affair but absolutely refusing to give the name of his accomplice, etc., etc.

Biographies were everywhere. Portraits and "pen sketches" were spread broadcast over the streets. The *Policeman's Own*, yellow tinted and profusely illustrated with wood cuts peculiar to that periodical, devoted an entire week's edition to my hitherto humble self and brought out on its title page a large fac-simile photograph, "taken from life," of the "celebrated and daring young actor and bank robber." One thing I could be earnestly thankful for—none of the cuts and sketches resembled me in the slightest degree, and the only direct outrage perpetrated was in the self-laudatory *News*, which one morning made a specialty of the "supposed picture of the Whitechapel murderer," and on the following day unblushingly reproduced it, with but one or two alterations, as a correct likeness of "the robber." But one becomes accustomed even to this. The reporters mentioned besieged keyholes, and dogged not only my footsteps, but Richmond's, in the vain hope of gathering something from



him. Richmond was not as lenient as I, and stories of the rough treatment the industrious scribes received at his hands frequently came to my ears. Richmond was, at the outset, arrested as the accomplice, but released on the examination, when the officer who gave chase testified positively he was not the man and furthermore gave an excellent description of Kohler. The indignity he suffered seemed to sour him forever on reporters or newspaper men of any kind, although I never considered he had the provocation I had.

One of the most memorable encounters with these persistent, provoking, yet necessary portion of our population, was the day an enterprising gentleman resorted to the old time step-ladder and transom method.

"What have you got to say?" he queried, leaning over the door, pencil in one hand and note book in the other.

I eyed him as grimly as possible from my seat by the desk and replied coldly, "Nothing."

"But this is for the *Gazette-Tribune*; I am the special correspondent and was sent here for



the express purpose of interviewing you," he remarked in a tone meant to convince that when the *Gazette-Tribune* sent a representative to interview one, there was no trifling about the matter.

"Young man, your enterprise in gaining access—even if but a partial access—to my apartment is commendable. Your sphere is in Siberia. Kindly take my regards with you to the managing editor of the great daily you represent, or whoever it was assigned you to this task, and inform him I have nothing to say."

"Did you do it?" persisted the interrogation point, not heeding my remarks in the least.

"Do what?" was the innocent inquiry.

"Rob the bank."

"Yes, twenty of them, stop a moment and I will give you the list!"

The young man, evidently growing heedless of his foot rest on the opposite side of the door, nearly fell headlong into the room as he endeavored to write in his leather bound note book, gasped something about his being "sent here for news, want news and won't go away with-



out news," and then floundered helplessly backward through the transom, and upon the carpet of the hall outside.

A moan came from without and alarmed lest the rash reporter had injured himself seriously, I unlocked the door and went to his assistance, disentangled him from the step ladder and chair and placed him on his feet. Ungratefulness is man's nature the world through, and unmindful of what I had done, not even deigning to thank me, he caught up his book and pencil, grasped me by the lappel of my coat and said, "Honestly now, didn't you do it?" I broke from him and fled from the house by a rear door. He is a queer man, this American spur-of-the-moment scribbler.

In nineteen cases out of twenty, reporters are gentlemen—there are exceptions in every calling. The American reporter has made himself what he is. He smiles in adversity and takes success as a matter of course. He is content to be known to the world as a "reporter for this paper"—it never gets any further. His only fault is that he is inclined rather egotistically among his fellow craftsmen. Usually



he is immobile. The pointed, and often sarcastic notes from the managing editor are received with the same outward show as the verbal sentence from the same source: "We had an excellent paper to-day; your article on the Flamflurry Flimsies was unusually good." He is beyond the fault of showing surprise, but the heart of the American reporter is just as susceptible of condemnation as it is of commendation; he is only a man after all. "Assignments" are never shirked, let them call him where they will. Patience and persistence are his rules in life. I can forgive a reporter many things not to be countenanced in people of other callings. He is ever on the alert for criminal "sensations"—the mistake of American newspapers. There was no original demand for criminal news; there is no demand now. The managing editor mistakes his readers every time he gives an order for a "spread" on the latest murder; he would have the homicide of Cain double-leaded, sub-headed, and a plat of the ground inserted, yet two-thirds of the readers would pass it by after perusing the head lines and seek the gossip, personal or



humorous columns. It is different when the baker runs away with the shoemaker's wife—it has been different from time immemorial. This is the true sensation—scandal. Every one reads the scandal column to the end and then regrets there was so little of it. Sensation spreading is often called journalism; if it is journalism, so is dime-novelism. It is proper that villainy should be exposed, but it is not equitable that it should be dwelt upon as it is in America; it is erroneous to make heroes of our murderers and saints of our adventurers. The whole thing may be corrected in the editorial rooms and at the desk of the managing editor.

It is not the American reporter's fault that homes are invaded and defiled and reeking scandal sown broadcast over the country. It is gradually drummed into him by unwelcome "assignments." And the reporter is distinctly an American article when one judges by enterprise. He takes a natural pride in his work, but is often inclined to over-estimate its worth, just as our novelists are. His connection with a daily paper does not insure that he has ability, especially in the West and South, where



matters are always carried to extremes. The man who uses his office to gain an unfair advantage over some opponent, the man who parades his calling on every narrow occasion, who persists in directing his acquaintances' attention to "my article on the Death of Jeremiah," who asks if something is due him for this morning's "send off," who really believes the world would not wag on without him, has accidentally stumbled into his position, is not a newspaper reporter and would undoubtedly attend to his duties as a blacksmith with better success and with greater satisfaction—at least to the world. One may be modest with profit in any profession and yet attend to business. The unobtrusive gentleman is the real gentleman and will be recognized more promptly than he who intrudes on the public peace. Happily, the last mentioned specimen is a rarity in the newspaper world; but where he does assume sway, stands an unmitigated nuisance. No one has, as yet, I believe, really analyzed the American reporter and American editor, and I am not attempting to do so. We countenance them at present as a necessity—among the people we could not do



without. We respect them for the good they often do, and with all their faults, still love them—when they keep within bounds.

Then there were the lawyers.

Hon. Hosea Legalboy was a practitioner and politician of much reputation and worth. He was “almost” elected to the lower house of Congress once, “very nearly” chosen Governor of the State at another time, and only the month previous to my peculiar misfortune “would have been” elected to a seat in the Senate of the United States, had his political party enjoyed the distinction of a majority in the state legislature. The main trouble with Mr. Legalboy politically was—he usually found himself on that particular spot, known in American politics as the “wrong side of the fence.” Legally, he had not a peer, and but very few equals. As a criminal lawyer, he was an expert and had once been referred to in a jury address, by a rising young attorney as the “gentleman who had aided more criminals in going unpunished than any attorney in the state.” Having a sufficient sum at my command to carry me through a most expensive ordeal—thanks to Manager



Liston — I had no hesitancy in seeking Hon. Legalboy from the outset. But when I related the peculiar case to him as it actually occurred, he smiled in a very superior way and remarked dryly, “weak, very weak—of course, no one will believe it, you don’t, I don’t, the Jury will not, and the Court will laugh.”

“Upon my honor, sir, every word I have spoken is true.”

“‘Honor among’—pardon me sir, but I am accustomed to deal with matters of this kind and you had better let me pursue just what course I think best. Now, I would demonstrate to the jury that while you may have been on the spot at the time this unfortunate affair occurred, you had nothing whatever to do with it and this policeman could not possibly have seen you, as the light from within did not strike you as you came from the building. I should further demonstrate that you went to the bank for very sufficient causes and—”

“Pardon me, sir, you do not seem to take into consideration the truth of the matter in any instance. Is not this man whom I have spoken



to you of directly responsible for the occurrence — is he not the guilty one, the one to be punished?"

"Possibly—if such a man lived, but, under the circumstances, I would demonstrate to the jury —"

"Something that is false in every particular. Well sir, since you are determined to demonstrate to the jury something entirely foreign to the nature of the case, I believe I shall be forced to seek some one else, who will conduct this peculiar affair on at least an honest basis." With this remark I arose and prepared to go, drawing on my gloves and starting for the door.

The Hon. Hosea Legalboy leaned back in his great easy office chair and gazed at me intently.

"You don't look exactly as I imagine an ideal bank robber would," he mused, "but you're a d—liar when you try to palm off any such tale on me as you just attempted to. Still, why not conduct a case in that form?" he mused. "By the Lord Har — have you told this story to any one else?"



"No sir,—that is, only to Richmond; he can testify I was lying in bed all the time," I replied eagerly. I was a great admirer of the Honorable Hosea and was willing to forgive all his uncharitable remarks, did he consent to take the case.

"Oh, Richmond can testify, can he," he remarked sarcastically, "and do you happen to know of any one else who can 'testify' so aptly?"

"Sir—" I began.

"I know, I know," he interrupted, "Richmond will be a good witness nevertheless. Hang it all, young man, I half believe your story, flimsy as it is. Come up to-morrow afternoon, relate it to me once more and we'll decide on some plan of warfare.—I'll take your case, hopeless as it is!"

\* \* \*

And Miss Barbury.

Bless her! She never doubted me for one minute, although I only hastily explained the affair to her.

"You didn't do it, I know you didn't and it will come all right in the end, I am sure, so sure, it will."



## VII

“Order, order in the court!”

The pompous little judge leaned forward in his creaking, rusty, un-oiled chair, rapped sharply on the oaken side of the desk with his small steel paper cutter, the buzz and hum of conversation throughout the immense room ceased, and I was “on trial” at last. The incidents of the past nine weeks passed quickly through my brain and I smiled involuntarily as I recalled the humorous features, frowned as the more complicated ones arose, and felt thoroughly miserable as I contemplated that the whole affair was no joking matter and the outcome of the trial really was a question of freedom or slavery—possibly of life or death. What swift changes had been brought about, what turning points in a hitherto smooth, unruffled career! “The unexpected always happens” was once the favorite citation of a



journalist I knew, and although I had before regarded the pet phrase rather heedlessly, it occurred and re-occurred to my confused brain as a full realization of my insecure position gradually dawned upon me. Why was I made to suffer? An innocent person, who had never intentionally done a wrong, who was content to live only in the atmosphere of his chosen profession, whose only desires were to rise to a place of honor in that profession, whose prospects had been exceedingly brilliant, yet whose hopes seemed needlessly crumbled through the intervention of a meddling, wizard-like old man, in his repulsive, sickening greed for gold? The thought was maddening. Why could I not trace him out, stop his hellish work and bring him to the steps of justice?

Why, why, why—the everlasting re-iterative why.

Sleep and I had been unknown acquaintances during the few days preceeding the trial, and sunken and heavy were the eyes of the “prisoner at the bar,” as they surveyed the crowd within the court when the judge rapped “order.” What a throng it was! Row upon



row of faces greeted my scrutiny, some brown, some red, some pale and very sickly; the face of the student, of the business man, of the lounge — all sensation lovers. Women there were, too, eagerly scanning the principal actors of the life drama, and while curiosity was stamped on the countenances of all, pity could be discerned on a few. Many leveled small black opera glasses at me, and their scrutiny made my cheeks burn; others not fortunate in the possession of glasses, peered over the heads of their neighbors and inquired "which is Marlton?"; a few leaned back in their seats and patiently awaited the beginning of proceedings. It was very like a theatre, and to the spectators the awful ordeal I was destined to go through seemed an entertaining drama; what was the actor to them? Could they be better pleased than with an unhappy *denouement*?

A low railing, extending the entire width of the room, separated the spectators from the court, the jury, the lawyers, the prisoner and the newspaper representatives. The latter, five in number, seated on a platform at the side of a long table on which was spread promiscuously



paper, pens, pencils, knives and ink, occupied a position of honor beside that dignitary "the Court," and cast searching looks down at "the prisoner" ever and anon as though to make sure he had not, through some mysterious power, vanished into nothingness and ingeniously escaped. The prisoner was seated at the side of his attorney and studied the physiognomy of the jury, the spectators, and occasionally the newspaper men themselves, while the attorney, evidently regarding matters like this daily occurrences, thrummed lightly with his fingers on the green baize table covering and vacantly regarded the attorney on the opposite side of the table who, in turn, just as vacantly disregarded him.

"Is the prosecution ready?"

The prosecution, represented by a rather slightly built man with a smooth boyish face which contrasted strangely with an almost totally bald head, signified it was, and thereupon arose and after stumbling through the preliminary necessities, grew rather excited and launched forth on what would be "demonstrated to the jury." The prosecution would show



that one of the boldest robberies ever perpetrated had occurred right in the heart of a throbbing, pulsing city. Daring, the prosecution would say, for the reason it showed there were thieves, nay murderers, at the very footsteps of citizens, that even barred doors were not safe against outrages, that, think of it gentlemen of the jury, (and the prosecution's voice was hoarse and sepulchral) "our lives are not safe in our hands!" The amount stolen in this case was very small, trifling, the prosecution would say; that was not the question; the very manner in which the robbery was committed cried out to heaven. A lesson was to be taught; gentlemen, let us teach it well. It was not alone the question of money, gentlemen, it was not alone the amount abstracted from that vault, it was, gentlemen—and think of it, sirs—it was a question of safety and of peace to the community; aye, not only the community but the world at large! There was, undoubtedly, a nest of thieves and bank robbers in this fair city, the pearl of the American continent, the pride of a thriving state! It was a nest of vipers, of scorpions; let us crush it out, gentlemen;



let us wipe it from the earth! We have one of their number, let us teach a lesson!

The prosecution wiped his face with a handkerchief and attempted to proceed, when the defense arose calmly and entered an objection.

"Already?" gasped the prosecution. "On what grounds, sir, what grounds, I should like to know?"

The defense remarked that the prisoner's guilt had not yet been proven; that the prosecution was not supposed to argue the case at present, but to tell the jury what method it was to pursue; that the prosecution's remarks were wholly irrelevant, and that the prosecution was "off" on the law and didn't know what he was talking about.

"Objection sustained," snapped the Court.

The prosecution glared at the defense, the defense glared back, the spectators laughed, were called to order, the jury nodded and the reporters scribbled furiously.

"We intend to show then," resumed the prosecution, "that Leslie Marlton, the prisoner at the bar, is one of a number of thieves, that he was the willing instrument of a bank robbery



that occurred on the morning of July 5th, at Brown & Brown's bank, that he was supplied with skeleton keys and a sufficient knowledge of affairs at the bank to gain an entrance and abstract money to the amount of \$12,000. Furthermore, we shall show, gentlemen," and the prosecution leaned earnestly forward, "that this knowledge was gained by the prisoner during a certain period when he was employed by Brown & Brown as book-keeper."

The prosecution gulped down a tumbler of water and resumed his seat with the expression of extreme satisfaction of having already won the victory.

The defense reserved its statement, and the prosecution proceeded with its witnesses, the little lawyer calling out, "Patrolman Newton," and that individual coming awkwardly forward, held his right hand aloft as though in mortal fear it would not be held high enough when the oath was administered. Patrolman Newton went through the usual tedious and seemingly unnecessary preliminary testimony with regard to his residing in B—— for so many years, his occupation, the age of



himself, his wife, and the number of young Newtons the family was blessed with, in a manner most exemplary, then proceeding to come down to business and state what he knew of the matter in hand, in which the people of state of —— were plaintiffs and Leslie Marlton, defendant. Patrolman Newton was on his beat, near Brown & Brown's bank, on the morning in question, and at about half-past 2 o'clock saw a man coming out of the front door of that edifice rather hurriedly; thought at first it was the watchman, but noticing his clothes were lighter than those usually worn by that individual and that he carried a tin box, he called out for the man to "stop;" the man thereupon started to run and joined a companion on the opposite side of the street. Witness said he saw the features of the man who left the bank, with such utter disregard for the warning of of the law, very plainly, and was positive that man was the one (pointing to the prisoner); he also saw his companion clearly in the moonlight, and the witness then described Kohler minutely, from his green little eyes to his ill-fitting shoes. He had observed the man (and this time "the



man" referred to was Kohler) assist the other along the alley as they ran, and had also observed "the man" take the tin box from the hand of the "other man" when the "other man" crossed the street. Having thus intelligently delivered himself, and after a rigid cross-examination as to whether such was such and he was sure "the man" was not "the other man" or *vice versa*, that his eye-sight was good, that he was confident he was forty years old and that the Newton family numbered four youngsters and a wife and mother (or questions to that effect) the blushing and bewildered policeman was allowed to retire.

As Policemen Willis, who was next called was sworn, and stepped on the witness stand, just as awkwardly as his predecessor, it occurred to me how strange it was that people who were familiar with the courts and legal proceedings seemed so greatly embarrassed when compared with those who were utter strangers to such matters. Later on, when other witnesses testified so coolly and I contrasted their actions with those of the two officers of the law, the puzzle became more conflicting and unsatisfactory to



solve. Patrolman Willis had been placed on the stand for the purpose of testifying that he had seen and talked with me on the night of the robbery, had spoken on several subjects, that I had appeared quite calm and that he had not observed any "pal" I might have had.

Then there came a whole troop of witnesses in rapid succession and what they said, or did, or testified to I never fully understood. I know that both of the Brown's were sworn and stated they "thought" I had been a trusted employe of theirs several years before, that I "looked like" him although he "*was* slightly bald," that the book-keepers' name was Muggins but he might have changed it to Marlton, Marlton and Muggins began with the same letter anyway; that nothing of the kind had ever occurred in their bank before, that they wondered how I "got onto the combination," that it was not the money they cared so much about as it was fear that another deed might be brought about in an equally mysterious manner, and an almost endless lot of rubbish that had nothing whatever to do with the matter in hand. Then



some one else "thought" he had observed me purchasing a bunch of keys the day before the robbery, another "thought" he saw me in the slums of the city talking with a person he considered a "very tough lot," and still another was not positive, but "believed" he had seen the prisoner with the self-same tough lot lurking around the bank several times. All of which would tend to show that I was a very bad lot myself and a person to be generally avoided and regarded with suspicion when met.

The examination of these witnesses consumed many hours' time and, although the majority of them were not positive of anything they said, they deemed it just as important to tell what they believed was the case, and so with long-drawn harangues, cross-examinations, objections, exceptions, over-rulings and other requirements for the successful carrying out of a legal suit, the day wore away, the shadows deepened in the corners of the great room, the judge fidgeted in his large chair and scowled at everybody, and shortly after the gas was lit, throwing a fitful glamour over desks and



people, the prosecution closed and the Court adjourned until the following morning for resumption of the case.

As I walked from the room with the honorable gentleman I had selected as my attorney, his eyes twinkled and he appeared greatly satisfied with the day's proceedings; and when, as we reached the bottom of the majestic staircase leading to the street and a messenger accosted him with a note, which the Honorable Legal-boy read with the aid of his gold-rimmed glasses and the flickering light of a gas burner, a slight smile crossed his face as he turned to me and said, "Young man, your case is not one half as hopeless as it was this morning."

Then the smile faded away, the grim, wrinkled face resumed its usual stern aspect, and, although I was literally aching to know what the note contained—for I felt certain it related to my case—I bade him good evening and started for my lodgings.



## VIII

On the following morning, when the Hon. Hosea Legalboy began to address the jury as to what he intended to demonstrate to that exalted body, there was little need of calling the steel paper cutter into use, for every one leaned forward as though naturally impelled to get as near the famous lawyer, even if but an inch or two, as was in any way possible under the existing circumstances. If possible, this interest increased as the gentleman proceeded, and when he came to the point of telling he would demonstrate that the case was one of clear hypnotism and I was the unwilling instrument of the robbery, the very breathing of the multitude sounded painfully loud. I glanced at the Court; his countenance wore a singularly puzzled look, singular because the case was undoubtedly the queerest he had probably ever been occupied with, puzzled—if I judged his



expression rightly—because he knew there must be something of truth in the matter, or a man of such distinction as the Honorable Legalboy would not enlist his services in such cause; and after that moment, it seemed to me, the Court regarded me rather more kindly. As for the prosecution, he sat with arms folded, a triumphant smile on his face, almost sneering, I might say, so confident he seemed that no proof of such a flimsy story could be established, and that it carried no weight whatever against the testimony he had introduced.

The jury was composed, for the most part, of respectable, sedate appearing old gentlemen, who looked in mild surprise at the lawyer as he faced them, his face flushed with excitement, his iron-gray locks tossed wildly back from his wrinkled forehead, and seemed to regard him somewhat in the light of a lunatic; they did not smile however, nor did they appear at all puzzled; a good “shaking” would doubtless have done them a world of good. Having finished with the main portion of his address, as to what he would “demonstrate” the lawyer concluded as follows, and I must confess his words



surprised me exceedingly: "As for witnesses in this complicated and unparalleled case, gentlemen, the defense offers but four—four, sirs, is all we require, and they will prove to you conclusively, and beyond a doubt, that this young man stands thoroughly innocent of the serious crime he has been basely charged with; we shall not demonstrate, gentlemen of the jury, that the prisoner, Leslie Marlton, did not enter the bank, but that he did so and abstracted the money therefrom under compulsion, that, as far as he was concerned, the robbery was not premeditated, as the prosecution would lead you to believe, but on the contrary, he was not aware of any such intention five minutes before he opened the door of that bank!"

"Four witnesses, are you mad?" I whispered as he resumed his seat. I had supposed—nay, actually knew that at least eight had been subpœnaed on my behalf, particularly those who were on the boat when I first met Kohler and had observed my hatred for him, Miss Barbury being one of the principals.

"Who will you get beside Miss Barbury, Richmond and myself?" I queried.



"Miss Barbury will not be called," replied the lawyer shortly, "you had better keep quiet; I am conducting this case," by way of an extinguisher; and then he said, "I could almost clear you with one witness if I chose."

This retort puzzled me greatly, but I decided to make the best of it, for Hon. Hosea Legal-boy probably knew better than I, I considered.

My name was called first, and my heart bounded high in my breast, thumped wildly as though clamouring for release from its imprisonment, while a filmy whiteness crossed my vision as I stepped forward, upholding my right hand for the oath. When I seated myself on the witness stand however, the first "stage fright" I had ever experienced left me, and I could even gaze calmly into the black, formidable barrels of the opera glasses leveled at me by a mature dame just beside the railing. I heard the murmur and rustle of approval as I came forward and even a slight attempt at applause, which was, however, quickly hushed by the steel paper cutter in the hands of his honor.

Lawyers stop at nothing when they get a witness on the stand. Often it seems to me,



they propound questions merely for the gratification of public curiosity, for what material difference does it make in a case to know where one was born, who one's parents were and who their parents were, how many sisters one had or how many brothers? I attempted to answer all interrogatories cheerfully however, and as for my history, like Othello,

*"Ran it through even from my boyish days  
To the very moment he bade me tell it,"*

and the crowd in the room seemed thoroughly satisfied with the recital. Of course my account of the meeting with Kohler and the subsequent events proved very interesting and was attentively, almost breathlessly listened to, and some smiled and shook their heads, while the jury evidently considered mine was a worse case of insanity than my lawyer's. The Court, however, wore the same puzzled, half doubting look.

Then Richmond was called and asked to relate his story, afterward being put to the tortures of a rigid and senseless cross-examination, tiring in the extreme.

"As a matter of fact," said the prosecution, in his attempt to induce Richmond to deny what



he had directly testified to (the prosecution always began with "as a matter of fact") "were you not asleep between the hours of two and three o'clock when you say you were so positive this man Marlton was in bed with you?"

"I was not asleep," firmly retorted Richmond, looking absently at "this man Marlton," "he kicked all the cloth—I—I—mean—"

"Ah, you were asleep then," observed the prosecution calmly and aggravatingly.

"I didn't say so."

"What made you stutter then; don't you know, as a matter of fact, that you were asleep?"

"I was not asleep," reiterated Richmond.

"How do you know you were not?"

This was a "stopper" certainly and Richmond mumbled that he supposed it was because he was awake.

"Ah-h," said the prosecution serenely, "you *suppose* it was because you were awake, do you; as a matter of fact were you not asleep, and further, were you not dreaming at the time?"



"No sir," exclaimed Richmond with a ring of triumph, "I know I was awake because I pinched myself."

Some indiscreet individual in the rear of the room gave utterance to an hysterical "te he" just then, which ended in a low wail of terror, as a vigilant deputy seized the offender by the ear. Richmond smiled and glanced at the prosecution, who turned very red indeed and stopped a rising "as a matter of fact" half way in his throat. Then he attempted to show that Richmond was wrong as to the time of night but my colleague was entirely too positive for the quizzing attorney and after a few more fruitless efforts on the part of the latter, was allowed to retire.

The next witness named by the Hon. Hosea Legalboy caused a great flutter throughout the audience, a glance of surprise on my part, a wild, startled look on the part of the prosecution, who, I felt assured, stifled an interesting sentence commencing, "well I'll be——," a look of expectancy on the part of the jury and a sudden lighting of the countenance of his honor who evidently believed he had an



inkling into the case at last; for my attorney has quietly commanded a deputy to call in James Hoy!

A door at the side was flung open and James Hoy, very pale, very weak and very much flurried, if the hectic flush on his cheeks was such an indication, limped in between two attendants, was placed in a chair, whereupon he immediately collapsed and had to be straightened up. Then some one held up the proper palm while the oath was being administered, and he was asked to tell his story. This, however, he was wholly unable to do, for he hardly knew what to say or how to begin, although, it seemed to me, he must have been thoroughly coached; finally he suggested, after hopelessly floundering around and collapsing twice, that Mr. Legalboy "draw him out;" which that gentleman at once proceeded to do with more satisfactory results. Mr. Hoy, at intervals between collapses, then gave a very comprehensive review of his life and family matters and then, "being brought out" further, dwelt on the robbery, or at least as much of it as he could dwell on, as follows:



"I hearn the do' slam an' jumped up from where I wuz sittin' in Misser Brown's office an' went out; there I seed this yer man" (indicating the prisoner, collapsing, and, upon being straightened again and asked "you say this man, what then" proceeded) "standin' in the middle of the flo"; I as't him to stop, and pulled my pistol; then I as't him where his pal wuz an' he opened his mouth to say suthin' when I hearn a noise on the winder as though it was some one tappin'; I look't past his shoulder an' saw a man lookin' inter the winder an' rite at me with th' horriblest eyes I ever yit seen in a person's head; they ges' kep' blinkin' an' blinkin' like two coals o' fire; then the thing raised its han's, like claws they were, an' a pain shot thru' me like as if a hot iron was stuck into my head an' the hole filled up with ice; then I guess I fell." Shuddering from the memory of the pain, of which he had given a doubtless true, if not artistic or thrilling recital, James Hoy collapsed again, this time recovering with much difficulty for the cross-examination, which the prosecution conducted in a half-hearted, slip-shod and wandering manner.



Bewildered as he was, however, he had presence of mind enough to ask the witness how his remarkable recovery came about, a question I was positively burning to have answered, but which to my disappointment, Hoy only replied to by saying he "supposed he come-to nat'rally," evidently not knowing he had been unconscious for any length of time. At the conclusion of the cross-examination there was, as might have been expected, and for that matter was expected, a final collapse, and the bank watchman was carried out unconscious by four stalwart deputies.

Mr. Legalboy had caused general surprise by the introduction of James Hoy — now he created a sensation by announcing "Justin Kohler," and when that important individual, who had dropped from my life for two months, was literally dragged in by two officers from an adjoining room, the buz and hum of the court room could not be stopped even by the steel paper cutter. There was no change in Kohler, excepting he had lost his sneering, hard smile; the wicked little green eyes were there and snapped more viciously than ever, and the uneven, black teeth



lent a most repulsive appearance to the face. Two deputies stood at his sides and were watchful and vigilant lest he should attempt to escape. For the first time in my life I noticed Mr. Legalboy excited; perhaps it would not have been observed by a less interested person, for the gentleman endeavored to suppress his feelings, but I could not fail to see that he was very troubled and seemed anxious to have the matter through with and Kohler out of his sight as quickly as possible. This may have accounted for his somewhat abrupt question at the very outset, and the discarding of the usual preliminary questions as to age, residence, etc., for he asked: "Who committed the robbery that occurred on the morning of July 5th, 188— at Brown and Brown's bank?"

Witness and attorney looked straight into each other's eyes, and it was several minutes before the question was answered; a mental conflict seemed progressing, a conflict to determine the stronger of two will powers. Finally Kohler said, "Leslie Marlton."

"Yes," said the lawyer, his voice somewhat



firmer, "but did he do it of his own free will?"

The stillness of the room was terrible; again a conflict between the powers of the mind occurred and again the terrible pause.

"No," very sullenly.

"Whose was it?"

There was no hesitation this time. Legalboy had conquered, yet each man regarded the other with the same steadfast gaze.

"It was mine."

"Do you believe in hypnotism?"

"I do."

"Are you a mesmerist or hypnotist?"

"Yes."

"You needed money on the fourth day of July, 188— did you not?"

"Yes."

"How much?"

"Twelve thousand dollars."

"When did you meet Leslie Marlton?"

"July Fourth, 188—."

"Where?"

"On the excursion boat 'Thespian.'"

"He saved your life, did he not?"

"Yes."



"Relate what occurred on that steamer."  
The lawyer leaned forward.

"I will not," slowly and clearly said the witness. Again the struggle. The lawyer sighed and resumed his questioning.

"You attended Liston's theatre on the night of July 4, did you not?"

"Yes."

"And there saw Leslie Marton?"

"Yes."

"You also brought your science of mesmerism into play to determine whether or not he was a good subject?"

"Yes."

"Did he prove such?"

"Yes."

"At the conclusion of the second act of *Broken Hearts*, you left the theatre and went to your lodgings?"

"Yes."

"And while there procured a small ivory toy, resembling a dragon, which you imbued with mesmeric power, a secret which you alone know?"

"Yes."



Here the prosecution recovered from his wonderment to the extent of entering an objection. "Let the witness testify himself; I object to having words put in his mouth," said he.

Legalboy got up to address the Court; he had evidently been expecting the objection, and seemed surprised it had not been entered before. The speech was of some length and based upon the plea that while "drawing a witness out" was not tolerated generally, this was an exceptional case, that moreover, it had already been allowed in this very case, as demonstrated in the testimony of James Hoy—why did not, asked the the lawyer, the prosecution enter an objection then? So thick leather bound books were brought to bear on the subject, a dispute ensued, and the whole matter ended in his honor sustaining the objection, after a lengthy address as to the reason of his so doing, the meaning of which I could not clearly understand, and at which ruling the defense called out sullenly, "exception," and pronounced loudly, a "remarkable proceeding in a court like this."



Legalboy resumed his seat, stared hard at Kohler and proceeded.

“Tell what occurred.”

“I refuse to do so.”

Legalboy and Kohler both leaned forward; the battle was an intensely bitter one; many wondered what the silence meant, while I fancied I could see sparks fly from the eye-balls of the two men as one sees fly from some flinty rock the moment a horse's hoof strikes it. The steadfast gaze conveyed little impression to the others in the room, perhaps; I understood, and the battle of the minds meant freedom or slavery to me.

How the clock ticked, ticked, ticked.

“He will lo-se, he wi-ll lo-se, pris-on, pris-on”, it said. Oh, God, would they never stop! Why did not some one cough, or laugh, or cry? Why this horrible, deathly stillness? “He wi-ll lo-se, pri-son, pri-son.” Yes, yes, he would lose. Why had the Court interfered? Why should he not allow Legalboy to proceed as he did at first, when he gained the victory? Where was justice, where law, where, ah!——



A low hideous laugh filled the room, and a body fell heavily forward on the floor. I started up in terror—Legalboy had failed. A loud murmur ran through the edifice and several shrieked. Some one shouted, “look to the prisoner,” as I stooped to lift the lawyer from the carpet. His face was ghastly, and his eyes glassy. A man standing near dashed water in his face, and his eyes gradually resumed their sparkling brilliancy. He staggered forward, shuddering; then, his eyes resting on Kohler, regarded him steadily for several minutes.

The crowd was in a tumult, yet, above it all a voice finally arose clearly and distinctly. “You will proceed,” it said, and I saw Legalboy toying with his gold-rimmed eye-glass as he spoke.

“A sudden faintness,” he explained to the Court, “the witness is now ready to speak.”

The lawyer leaned back in his chair, and Kohler, with a look of malignance, began his narrative.

“This image I sent as a gift to Leslie Marlton directly he reached his lodgings; the moment he looked into the eyes of the creature



and fell asleep, he was in my power; I walked the streets for several hours and finally called his counterpart before me—the Leslie Marltan of dreams, but not of the flesh; his body lay with his companion; his heart, his brain and soul were mine; I let them enter the body I conjured up—a reproduction of his, a body suited to my purpose; the key used to enter the bank was made from a wax impression I secured; the combination of the vaults was given me by the cashier of the bank, whom I one night drugged; I impressed the number on my subject's brain and he carried out my desires."

"Before I turn the witness over to the prosecution," said Legalboy, in his usual calm tone, "I shall have him demonstrate, if the Court please, that such powers as he described really exist—that the body of a man may be in one place and his counterpart in another."

The lawyer then produced, from a small satchel at one side of his chair, the same ivory dragon Kohler had presented me with. This he placed on the table near me and requested that I look intently at the ruby eyes. I did so.



"The witness will," said the lawyer, "concentrate his mind so thoroughly on his subject that Leslie Marlton's counterpart will walk to the end of the room, while his body remains in that chair." There was a short pause. Then I fell asleep.

\* \* \* \* \*

Wondering amazement was discernible on the faces of every one within the room, and on no one more than that of the prosecuting attorney. The Court appeared greatly disturbed; the jury stared at me with eyes like tea-saucers as I slowly awoke.

"This, may it please the Court, is our case," remarked Hon. Hosea Legalboy, rising, "we are prepared for argument. I observe the prosecution does not desire to cross-examine—remove the witness."

Kohler arose and started for the ante-room door, the vigilant deputies still beside him. As he neared my chair he hissed in my ear: "You—all for you!" Then his shackled hands were lifted in the air, and before their progress could be stopped the cruel chain descended on my head.

\* \* \* \* \*



"Hush, you must not stir."

A soft breeze entered the window and fluttered among the curtains; then it stole over to the bed and fanned my cheeks softly; the end of a bandage fell over my eyes and was gently re-arranged by a dainty, pink-tinted hand. The room was very still and peaceful and cheerful.

"Have I been ill?"

"Yes, nearly a week."

The pink-tinted hand stroked my aching head and the gentle voice again commanded me not to stir as I attempted to look into the face of the possessor of the attractive palm.

"Very ill?"

"Yes, dear."

Dear!

"What about the trial?"

"You are not to talk of that."

"Well, I won't; was it guilty, or — the other?"

"The other."

Another breeze stirred the curtains.

"Is this Marion?"

"Yes."

"You said 'dear,' just now."



“Ye—no; you must hush; the doctor said so.”

“Dear.”

“What?”

“I wanted to know how it sounded.”

The breeze died away.

“Marion, I love you.”

“Hush—the doctor says—”

“Will you be my wife?”

“How you talk; the doctor—”

“But will you?”

“Yes; now go to sleep.”



## IX

It is singular how we become accustomed to things. One may, after a time, habituate one's self even to matrimony. Two months previous to my enrollment on the books of the Liston company I regarded marriage as something that must come sooner or later, something that must happen sometime—perhaps the later, the better, a sort of remote necessity, a leap into the matrimonial sea being equivalent to a plunge from the tower of Belem. Well, it is not so very terrible; you have only to fall in love—and it's not nearly so bad as falling in the water. I suppose many marry without consulting the Cupid oracle, but with those I have nothing in common. Love and Friendship, I once supposed were greatly alike, but when you come to study the matter you will see the difference. One cannot properly define love, it assumes so many guises, but if you ever discover a man



who has a reasonable happy lot on earth and isn't growling for something better, who can look on another's success and say honestly, "I congratulate you;" who views the world with a kindly interest for all—you have found a friend, a real friend. I knew such a one once. He died. Richmond was greatly like him; yet, somehow, the subject of friendship was never discussed between us, there being a sort of mutual understanding that we were friends and were to continue as such. But friendship is not, strictly speaking, love.

I have been re-reading the newspapers to-day—papers seven weeks old. Since their issuance, one has changed its political bias and is warmly championing the cause of a gentleman it formerly dubbed a razor-backed, toothless old miser who would be a disgrace to a pig sty and would corrupt the morals of the gentlemen in red himself. Another apologizes for casting improper reflections on Colonel Joshua Newcomb, and remarks, "Since our issue of August—we have learned that Colonel Newcomb is not a bull-headed idiot, as was inadvertently stated, but a thorough Kentucky



gentleman, who believes in the Government at Washington and still takes his invigorator straight." A third apologizes for two columns of stolen editorials on the navy by stating that the editor was imposed upon and the writer discharged immediately his villainy became known. This does not interest me, but the columns headed "A Sensation in Court," "The Brown Bank Robbery" and "A Sudden Ending" serve to, for they tell of the dismissal of the case of the People vs. Marlton, and the arrest of the guilty person, appropriately embellished with apologies and invectives, curiously mixed, for our newspapers are like our beverages.

I threw the papers aside and walked toward the broad window. Across the street a great red poster announced the re-appearance of the "famous" actor, Leslie Marlton, and a "gorgeous production" of—here wind had torn away part of the name, and there remained the oddly lettered words "School for—the Hunchback." Yes, to-night we have another "revival"—one of the old time plays and one in which I feel I shall be thoroughly at home, for in it my wife



makes her first appearance, that is, her first appearance *as* my wife, although the bills do announce:

Helen, . . . Miss Marion Barbury. But Marion knows, and I know, and for that, for all I can tell, the whole city knows; for the marriage attracted considerable attention and the church was crowded.

Of course Manager Liston desired "Broken Hearts" but I refused firmly, and mayhap rather unjustly, to again appear as the unsightly Moustas, for which declaration I was termed a blank fool, a blank, blank fool, and a divers assortment of fools and lunatics. When an American can think of nothing else to do he swears—and when he swears, if you have been disputing with him, you know you have won your point. To make my resolution more binding, I deliberately thrust four acting editions of "Broken Hearts" in the fireplace at Manager Liston's office, and this too, before that gentleman's horrified eyes. We both watched the leaves curl up with touching agony as the flames reached them, burn brightly for a moment or two, then change into little



demons of black and scurry up the chimney in the hot, transpicuous air.

"You mean it then?" said the Manager, sadly.

"Yes."

"After all I have done for you—bail, and lawyers and reporters and all?"

"Yes."

"I can dismiss you."

"I can go on the road."

"You will remain with me."

And there it ended.

To-day a blue-coated messenger boy with sulphuret of iron buttons stumbled indolently up the steps and pulled the door bell from its resting place—messengers always reserve their strength for door bells. He had some difficulty in finding his book, but finally drew it from one of his boots, and handing me an oblong package, requested my signature, obtained it, and ambled out of sight. Marion was at rehearsal, the house very quiet and a soft, pattering rain struck the window panes musically. As I untied the cords binding the package, and threw them carelessly in the open grate, the wrapper



fell to the floor and disclosed a quantity of coarsely written manuscript, the very last page upturning and revealing the signature, "Justin Sigismund Kohler." This made my hand tremble and possibly I glanced rather nervously around the room, as I straightened the crumpled pages and prepared to read the lines they contained.

## IN MY CELL.

LESLIE MARLTON:—

Let it be understood at the commencement, that I write from no motive of sympathy, either for you or myself. Three things, it seems, are left me—to sleep, to write, to go mad. It is impossible to sleep—my head would scorch the pillows, from the seething fire in my brain. Insanity is very near me, so near, I find it hard to drive it off, even with the mind and power that has overcome the world's obstacles so wonderfully. Men exclaim and idly wonder why other men go mad,—unthinking, languid, remiss bodies who only ask and wonder, and wondering forget. Confine them in a dark, ill-smelling prison with nothing but their thoughts for company, with



the horrible, close darkness of a vault pressing them down, and then ask them to define it—ask them what madness is, of what life is valued at when madness must terminate it.

Did you ever study the problem of life as given in the arithmetic of ages? The problem men are always studying and studying? Did you ever ask yourself what it was? Is it just, and right, and fair? We may trace the beginning, but only surmise the end. Struggling and striving, and all we really know is death. It is horrible, this death—few know how horrible, and to nine out of ninety thousand it means something. The ancient, fearful death about us every day; ever at our sides, ever watchful of our conduct, ever vigilant and observant of our misdeeds, perpetrate them where we will; grinning, leering, revengeful, exacting death.

The game of life is drawing to a close with me; like others, I have staked too high and lost. Even hope, the true elixir of life, has left me, the hope on which we build such wondrous enterprises, and to-night as the shadows from the cell corners scurry around the flickering, unsteady light,



by the aid of which I scrawl upon this paper; as the moan of a frenzied, sinful murderer reaches my ear from a cell adjoining, I ponder on the bright career once open before me, a career of science I was slowly perfecting, and then pace the stone floor, even venture into the mysterious corners, and curse again and again—curse you and the law.

Sages extol contentment and tell us what it brings. Ah well, contentment, like woman, is incapable of analysis. There is truly no contentment. The heart only knows it for a fleeting time and then thumps on with its heaviness and sorrow. I have never known it, —never can. It is like the paradise men speak of, pray for, and even look for. I thought I knew it once, but found after all, 'twas but a fleeting delusion. There is no earthly paradise —no paradise that lasts; somehow it grows old, and faded, and threadbare, the gold being only tinsel after all and the crystal, nothing but glass. Purgatory is near, black and horrible, paradise so unreal and far away, we scarcely catch glimpses of it, even in dreams, and I never dream.



To-night the wardens gave me a candle—it is the first favor they have granted me since my imprisonment. I am shunned. The keepers come near me, only to hand me food; my companion prisoners avoid me and whisper lowly when, during the half hour of recreation, I pace the iron barred corridor. I am left alone with the shadows and with my thoughts. They would not let me write before and the darkness has been much too great both day and night in my cell, even were I so inclined. To-day, to save myself from madness, I requested paper, ink and a light, and my petition was granted. “I pity you,” said the jailer when he brought them. Pity!—there is no pity.

It is a great relief for me to write—even though the letter is for you whom I hate and even though I must make haste, for the candle is but a short one and will soon burn out.

You heard me testify I was a hypnotist—so I am, and so I am contented to be. Hypnotism is a science with which few are familiar, yet thousands blindly blunder into it, only to be burned like the moth around the candle. It means more than the definition of the word,



more than you have ever read, more than you ever will read concerning it. How or when, or where I first became interested in the alluring study matters little to you. I do not intend to discuss the great science Mesmer, Von Glaben and others abandoned while merely in its infancy—my knowledge shall pass into oblivion with me. The fascinating and mysterious subject occupied my whole attention; the rarest of old books found their way to my apartments, and reading I grew more enthusiastic—nothing should deter my investigation of the absorbing science and make it kneel to me as master. So the time passed on and I slowly grew to understand, to live another life. The birds fluttered from the tree tops at command, and the crawling, loathsome serpent was harmless near me. I determined on more worthy subjects—the mind of man must succumb even as the birds and reptiles. My first victim died. He was a young man in the very sunshine of life and hope and was found one autumn day in the woods, his countenance the color of the blood-red leaves, his body rigid like the brown oak. Some one said an enemy strangled him, but



none knew of an enemy, so they buried the man and that was all. My failure made me more eager for success; I must study, study and perfect myself. For years the world saw nothing of me, rolled on through time and forgot my very existence.

Finally I tried once more, and the attempt was successful beyond my wildest dreams—the mind of man was subjected. I would stop at nothing now, the world itself should not stand in the way of my hopes and desires—I would control kings; know the secret of philosophers.

Then a woman then crossed my way. She was young, and pure and beautiful. Marguerite I called her, for she ever reminded me of unfortunate Gretchen. Like a fool I loved her passionately; a love, like others, not returned, and bestowed on another to whom she gave her heart. Cursing I fled from her presence; then, cursing still, prepared a horrible revenge. Do you know to what extremes jealousy will exert itself? Do you know hell itself assists the revengeful? The woman, once so pure and cheerful, drooped and recoiled from the world, lifted her troubled eyes to her God and asked



for help, for pity; and then, receiving neither, cast herself upon the earth and cried aloud in her despair. Her lover sought her side, and pleaded to know her secret trouble—she avoided him and kept within the seclusion of her chamber, while her cheeks grew paler and her prayers more tearful. One day he forced an entrance and demanded the truth, was made acquainted with her supposed perfidy and horror-stricken fled, cursing as I had cursed; she had not sinned, but carried the burden of sin.

And the young girl died.

Now I devoted myself to my science, perfecting where weak, and daring into more brilliant fields than I had ever hoped to dare. So interested did I become in the fascinating thing that my wealth slipped unconsciously from my control and I found myself almost penniless in the streets. Robbery I never contemplated, and I had no friends to ask assistance from. One day chance threw in the way of a half drunken bank cashier and obtaining control of his mind, I induced him to divulge the secret of the combination lock of



Brown and Brown's vaults. The day previous he had placed a box containing money in a certain part of the vault and the position of this I clearly impressed on my mind from his description. The same evening I obtained a wax impression of the key to the entrance door of the bank from Hoy, the watchman, by a clever piece of strategem of which he was none the wiser nor probably is to this hour.

I must be brief, as the candle burns low.

My next step was to procure a proper subject for the completion of the plan; the cashier I found impossible to control when not under the influence of drugs. Suddenly I bethought me of a simple country boy at a farm house on the river with whom I had often experimented and with whom there could be no danger attached in carrying out my designs. As you may surmise, with my arts at command there were hundreds of familiar methods, but, selecting the one easiest of consummation, I arranged for its completion. On my way to the farm I met you—a love-sick man with nothing but love at heart. Recognizing a proper subject I endeavored to keep you in sight as often as



possible during the journey on the boat, but you cleverly avoided — guided probably by an instinctive impression of dislike.

The boy at the farm had been dismissed, — gone, no one knew where.

That night I returned to the city and attended the theatre. From the moment you entered the stage you were in my power — in you I recognized the most pliable subject I had ever attempted to direct. Partly as an experiment and partly for amusement, I led you to believe you were really transformed into the character you represented, and, noting I could easily do this, I conceived the idea of so magnetizing a small ivory image I occasionally used, that it would in turn act upon you. This image I sent as a gift, to your apartments. The sequel you well know.

\* \* \* \*

Everything existing has its double — its astral self, floating in nothingness, moving among the stars, drifting hither and thither aimlessly until called to complete, or assist in the work of its more pragmatic counterpart. Mayhap it is never called — it is often so. It is not my intention



to elucidate the mysteries of these astral psychologic phenomena, for it is something you could never comprehend. I am more than a hypnotist, a mere mesmerizer. Astrology has as much in common with the peculiar science of which I alone am master as has odylic force. So, call me what you will—hypnotist, mesmerizer, psychologist, metaphysician, you will leave unnamed what I really am. When I speak of your astral self, I do not promote the theory that it possesses the soul of the mortal. It is, in reality, but an invisible body which, when summoned to earth, becomes perceptible to mortal eyes as a substantial thing, yet is merely inanimate until the soul enters the lifeless tenement. It was a division of soul caused by me that created the wonderful demeanor of your astral self witnessed in your dream—one half your vital being viewing what the other half was engaged in. Through obtaining control over your too ductile mind, I succeeded in so charging your second self with a portion of you, as to make it thoroughly obey what commands I willed. It was a glorious success, a triumph of—but all has passed. \* \*



Here several pages, evidently relating to astrology, were so hastily written as to be totally unintelligible. The only sentence I could distinguish was "The world will ever be full of worry and trouble and dispute; ever at war with itself, smiling on conflict and frowning on peace. Men make it so—vanity and false pride rule too rigidly," and then the manuscript continued as follows, the characters being more legible:

\* \* \* \*

With the money in my possession, I fancied myself secure, and secluding myself in a country house, that I might proceed with my studies unmolested, settled down to quietness. For a time nothing disturbed me. I learned of your arrest and smiled, determining to let the law deal with you as it would. A month before your trial occurred, strange dreams began to trouble me; day by day my magic powers grew less. With horror I realized some stronger will had sought mine out and was directing it as it wished. For days I fought against it—then succumbed; I was drawn, much against my will into the city. One day I walked into the



office of your attorney; I could not guide myself, force of will power drew me thither, and for the first time, I met a man who could influence me. He merely looked up on my entrance, smiled, and said dryly:

“The trial occurs to-morrow; be on hand. You need not trouble about Hoy; I have restored him; your powers are weak.”

Then he dismissed me. I was purple with passion as I left his presence. The next day I was on hand in the ante-chamber, but was not called. On the following, however, Legalboy, feeling his power weakening, gave me into the hands of officers the moment I appeared. When I was called, I struggled fiercely, but could do nothing. On the witness stand I made every resistance possible against the will of my opponent; once I won, and grasped at the floating hope that I should yet overcome him. Then I lost, and told the story. When I left the room I was insane with rage which vented itself upon you and caused you misery I hoped might end in death. My hypnotic powers had left me, all through you. I was helpless. They carried me to prison and



placed me in a dark, foul cell, with only my thoughts to bear me company—thoughts to drive me mad.

Legalboy has been absent for some time; I know it and feel it, because a portion of my former powers have returned to me. To-day I mesmerized a mouse caught in my cell; this is nothing, however, little worse than feebleness—the moment the superior mind returns, my power will vanish once again. Why did you stand between science and the light? What is your life to mine? Compared to what I should have made it? Hell and the fiends, had I you here in my cell, I would strangle you, and cut your body into shreds! I should——

The candle has nearly melted away; its light is flickering and turning blue.

To-night I shall vanish from the earth forever—dissolve into that spaceless blue you have so often endeavored to penetrate with your eyes. “He has escaped,” they will say to-morrow when they discover in my cell only the horrible shadows and hear the whispering voices. Then they will marvel how, for the lock is secure, the walls and floor are cold and



solid; and the world will take up the question. Men will ever ask how and why? And what do I escape,—earthly humiliation. What exchange? Mortal despair for confinement and torture of even greater agony and horror than I have known here—torture, I trust, even you may never acquaint yourself with. But I have much to be grateful for in that I possess the power to escape humiliation—to escape contempt. *Adieu.* The light has gone out.

THE END.









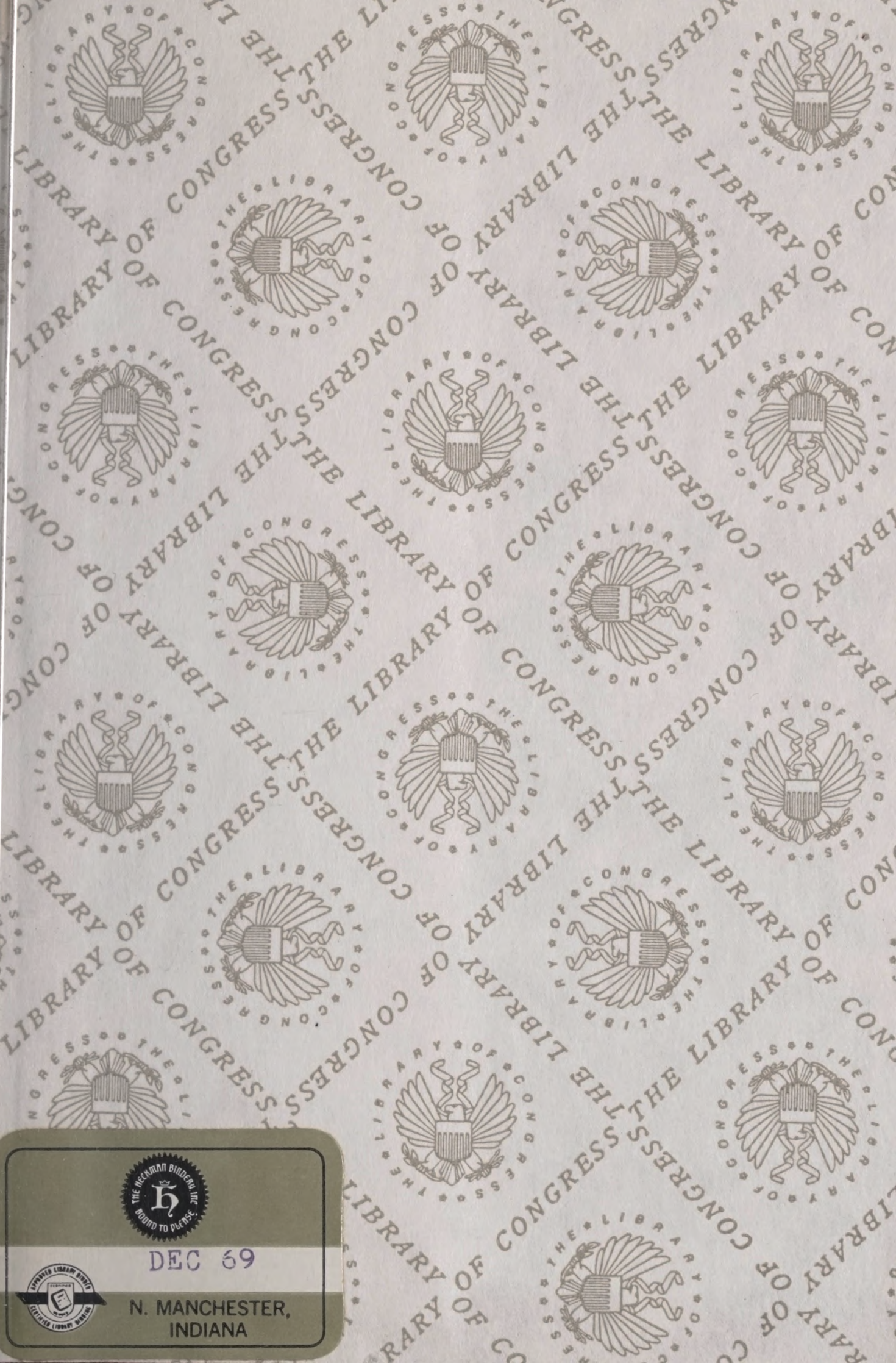












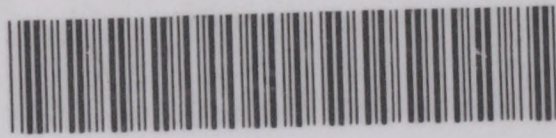
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